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Heide Goettner-Abendroth

Matriarchal Societies of the Past and the Rise of Patriarchy

West Asia and Europe

Translated by Hope Hague, Simone Plaza and Tracy Byrne

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About the author

Dr. Heide Goettner-Abendroth is a German philosopher and founder of modern Matriarchal Studies. Her first magnum opus is *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe* (2013). She was visiting professor at the universities of Montreal, Canada, and Innsbruck, Austria, and is director of the independent "Academy HAGIA for Matriarchal Studies." She has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, in 2005 by a Swiss and in 2007 by a Finnish initiative.

About the book

This book is about re-writing the history of cultures from a non-patriarchal perspective, bringing the forgotten matriarchal epoch to light again. It is based on Heide Goettner-Abendroth's pioneering anthropological research on still extant matriarchal societies worldwide, which provided her with a new definition of "matriarchy" as true gender-egalitarian societies. According to modern Matriarchal Studies, matriarchies have never needed patriarchy's hierarchical structures of domination, as they are socially egalitarian, economically balanced, and politically based on consensus decisions.

This is the author's background for re-examining the history of cultures. She criticizes the patriarchal prejudices which abound in archaeological interpretations, and their blindness to the great variety of human social forms. By going deeper into this material she is able to develop a completely different picture of the earliest cultural epochs, which were decisively formed by women, motherhood and maternal values. Additionally, she gives a logical and detailed explanation for the rise of patriarchy, which is based on archaeological finds and not on speculation and, therefore, has a high degree of validity.

The range of the book includes the development in West Asia and Europe from the Palaeolithic via the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. In this wide field, the author creates revolutionary new insights, which are relevant for all social and historical sciences.

"Dr. Heide Goettner-Abendroth, mother of the discipline of Modern Matriarchal Studies, has produced a long-awaited, groundbreaking study which not only addresses the origins of patriarchy, but more importantly, the long period of human history which preceded it. Covering the period from the Paleolithic to the Iron Age, she takes us on a journey from the earliest mother-centered societies of the Paleolithic, to the matriarchal societies of the Neolithic, and finally to the period when all that remains are matriarchal elements within patriarchal surroundings. Along the way she debunks many cultural myths, including the myth of eternal warfare."

—Dr. Joan Cichon, Independent Scholar, Author and Co-director of the Association of Women and Mythology

"In this time of planetary crisis that many of us believe has been caused by the toxic mix of Patriarchy and Capitalism, this book is an answer to the urgent question, 'Where did Patriarchy come from?' Dr. Goettner-Abendroth's profound research and deep alternative perspective bring to light the roots of our present dis-ease and give hope that by knowing the truth of the past we can find a way to heal the future. This book should be required reading for feminists and social change activists everywhere."

—Genevieve Vaughan, Philosopher, Author of Many Books and Founder of International Feminists for a Gift Economy

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Foreword

Historiography tends to focus on war; it is concerned about domination, about emperors, kings and other potentates, and their expansion of power. As such, it is male history, albeit not the history of all men. Women do not form part of this history, aside from a few exceptions, which do not alter the patriarchal nature of the narrative. But women make up half of humanity; they are not marginal. Their situation is indicative of the respective state of diverse societies in general; in other words, the degree of freedom in society as a whole can be gauged by the freedom of women.

Women and their achievements have been treated as marginal or non-existent by conventional archaeology, too, just as if women's practical inventions and the social and cultural patterns they created had never existed. Some contemporary female archaeologists and cultural researchers, as well as a few male archaeologists, have opposed this standardized view with explicit criticism and expert arguments. However, their critiques have hardly left a mark on current archeological practice, which still perpetuates the patriarchal view of history.

The aim of this book is to help redress this bias by using an integrating approach to rewrite and rebalance human cultural history. This provides a new perception, seeing cultural history not only from "above" but also from "below" and therefore providing a more differentiated, more versatile interpretation; the only way to achieve complete understanding. Above all, it is not simply about the early history of women or the “feminine,” not just about women and men, but rather the history of a very different form of society, matriarchal society, with its social, economic and political institutions, and its different world view. However, this form of society was essentially shaped by women, and supported by maternal values, such as respect for diversity combined with general reciprocity, making it fundamentally egalitarian. In this kind of society, women and men, as well as the different generations, lived together in ways that are very different from what we are used to today.

The emergence of patriarchal patterns is also explained, not through theoretical speculation, but based on archaeological findings. The origins and development of patriarchy differ widely in the various cultural zones of the world, so there is no simple, universal explanatory pattern. This book looks at the emergence of patriarchal patterns in the major cultural areas of West Asia and Europe, and also the conditions for their subsequent expansion. However, as these patterns evolved, it becomes evident that they are by no means natural, but rather historical, and can therefore be overcome.

Introduction: The Development of Modern Matriarchal Studies and Its Relevance for History of Cultures

A Clarification of the Concept

Understanding the concept “matriarchy” presents a problem for both the general public and the dominant schools of academic thought, since it carries a burden of prejudice and controversy. In modern Matriarchal Studies, however, the term has been clarified and is used as a matter of principle. There are several reasons for this:

To the present day, the concept of “matriarchy” was inaccurate and imprecise in meaning because it was defined inadequately or not at all, and thus has generally continued to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Contrary to appearances, it is not parallel to the term “patriarchy,” which means “dominance or rule of the fathers.” To translate matriarchy as “dominance or rule of the mothers” is neither linguistically nor factually correct, since in Greek the word *archē (ή αρχή)* means both “domination” and “start, beginning, origin.”[1]

←1 | 2→

This meaning of *archē* as *start, beginning* is seen in terms such as “archetype,” “Noah’s ark,” or “archaeology.” No one would translate “archetype” as “ruler-type,” or “archaeology” as “the study of dominance,” nor does “Noah’s ark” mean anything like “Noah’s rule.” Instead, archaeology clearly means “the teachings of (cultural) origins”; archetype means “an original prototype,” and Noah’s ark, according to the Bible, refers to humanity’s new beginning after the deluge.

Therefore, we translate the word “matriarchy” correctly as “in the beginning, the mothers.” Only later, when it was claimed in the framework of patriarchal ideology that domination had existed since the beginning of history, did the word *archē* also take on the second meaning of “dominance.” This is why “patriarchy” is rightly translated as “dominance of the fathers,” which also means “rule by men.” Matriarchal societies, on the other hand, are not the mirror image of patriarchal societies, but represent instead a completely different form of society that long endured throughout early cultural history. It is wrong to translate “matriarchy” as “dominance of the mothers,” meaning the “rule of women.” Instead, the translation “in the beginning, the mothers” accurately characterizes the situation.

The misinterpretation of the concept “matriarchy” as “the rule of mothers or women” has led hundreds of scholars with a patriarchal orientation to adhere to this fiction in their citations; some even consider it good form to constantly parade this misconception like a mantra. Other scholars have combed through the historical and ethnological record with knowing irony, searching for such societies and, of course, finding none. It is as if they had invented a phantom and then gone searching for it, so that in the end, when it could not be found, it could be declared “a phantom.” This is nothing but an illogical circular argument and a shameful waste of research effort.

From this we can see that the definition of “matriarchy” as “rule of the mothers” is empty; it can neither be used nor cited, and it requires redefinition based on fact, not ideology.

There are three good reasons for redefining the term:

1. Philosophical and scientific definitions often take generally familiar words from everyday speech and redefine them. After that, scholars can work with them without losing their connection to everyday language. In this process concepts gain a new, clear, more comprehensive meaning than in everyday language. The concept “matriarchy” is generally well known because it has been the subject of lively debates since the 19th century. By now, the word has a long tradition and is a familiar concept in everyday language.

←2 | 3→In many cases concepts that are redefined in turn influence everyday language; in the case of “matriarchy,” which is seldom used objectively, this would be to great advantage, since it would mean reclaiming the largely repressed knowledge of mother-centered cultures.

2. In the case of research on matriarchy, it is not useful to substitute concepts like “matrilineal,” “matrifocal,” “matricentric,” “matristic,” “gynaikostatic,” “gylanic,” and so on. They are artificial and out of touch with everyday language; that is, they are not generally comprehensible. Instead of formulating a clear definition of “matriarchy”—something that up to now has been lacking in the history of relevant scholarship—academics have only introduced weaker, quite arbitrary substitutes. It is true that these terms evoke individual elements of this societal form, such as “matrilineal,” which refers solely to lineage and lacks the broader relationship. Moreover, terms such as “matrifocal,” “matricentric,” and “matristic” suggest that in non-patriarchal societies everything revolves around women or mothers, perhaps in some kind of “mother cult.” But every mother cult is an efflorescence of patriarchy and has nothing whatever to do with matriarchy. Such a reductive view of these societies neglects the variety of relationships within their complex social structures between women and men, elders and youth, sisters and brothers, and so on. The terms “gynaikostatic” and “gylanic” are so alien

that nobody understands them unless they know Greek. Moreover, they are also incorrect in semantic terms.

3. To use the concept “matriarchy” in its redefined and clarified meaning also has political implications. In using it, we are not evading what is a vital and necessary discussion with experts and the interested public; evasion can easily occur with the other concepts, which tend to obscure and diminish. The political relevance of this goes much further, however, as is evident in modern Matriarchal Studies which works with a scientific redefinition of the concept “matriarchy.” Its research intersects with the political intentions of various alternative movements struggling for self-determination. As a result, there are important areas of overlap with a variety of feminist currents on all continents, insofar as these offer critiques of women’s internal colonization within society by various forms of a global patriarchy that assigns to women only object status. The feminist perspective, by contrast, sees women as active subjects in society and history.

←3 | 4→

Yet the repressive, exploitative forms of patriarchy do not only affect women and children; they also affect most men, though in a different way, which explains why men in many international movements also struggle for a fundamental change to this situation and for a better society. More than a few of them have come to see in modern Matriarchal Studies a way to give greater social and historical depth to their struggle.

Likewise, this research is an important support for indigenous peoples in their struggles for cultural identity, as they criticize and resist the external colonialism that is a part of patriarchy. This appears in especially crass form when we are speaking of the last still existing non-patriarchal cultures, some of which explicitly call their social orders “matriarchal”—and by this they certainly do not mean “rule of the mothers or women.”[2] Significant overlaps exist here between indigenous peoples’ studies of their own societies and modern Matriarchal Studies with its adequate definition of matriarchy. This definition supports the traditions of individual matriarchal societies by showing them in a new and meaningful light, while at the same time advancing the global interconnectedness of matriarchal societies among themselves.[3]

The Definition and Its Logic

Here the fundamental question is: how can anyone know anything with certainty about matriarchy, and how can it be defined at all if this topic is pushed to the margins and buried in prejudices? And yet traditional research on matriarchy has long existed in the German language realm, already beginning in 1861 with Johann Jakob Bachofen's work *Das Mutterrecht*.[4] Shortly before that, Henry Lewis Morgan had set in motion the anthropological-ethnological field of research on matriarchy (1851).[5] For more than a century, the discussion about "mother right" and "matriarchy" continued in both bourgeois-conservative and leftist circles, but solely from a male perspective. In the process, this topic was used and abused from the most various points of view by philosophical schools and political trends.[6]

←4 | 5→

Astonishing in these various works on mother right or matriarchy is the lack—despite good material collection—of a clear definition of this field of knowledge and a scholarly foundation for it. The concept "matriarchy" remained so vague that nearly everyone could understand it in a different way. But how is it possible to do scholarly work without ever having defined the area under discussion? That omission has opened the floodgates for emotions and ideologies that have burdened this discussion from the very beginning. All too common were *cliché*s about the "essence of woman," which only show that, when dealing with this topic, self-reflection within the critique of patriarchy has not been carried out. From this followed, and still follow today, massive projections of bourgeois-patriarchal conditions backwards onto early cultural history, starting with Bachofen, as well as in anthropology's projections onto non-Western indigenous societies, starting with Morgan—a problem that makes many so-called “research findings” worthless. As a result, all traditional, bourgeois-patriarchal research on matriarchy rests on a shifting foundation.

Added to this, cultural-historical research on matriarchy soon arrives at its limits, since the early matriarchal cultures were destroyed and left only fragmentary remnants. They have also been and continue to be distorted by thick layers of patriarchal interpretation. On this basis it is impossible to arrive at a complete picture of matriarchal societies. We can no longer find out how people in early matriarchal societies lived, how they acted and celebrated, how they managed their economic and social orders, and how they behaved politically. If we wish to avoid the danger of substituting fantasy for knowledge, we cannot begin with cultural history, but must turn to the still extant societies of this kind, that is, we must start with anthropological-ethnological research. Even when weighed down with colonialist and sexist prejudices, it described and still describes this type of society through direct contact in eyewitness accounts.[7] The picture of these societies has become much clearer recently through feminist research, which is able to see the significance women have in them, and even more through the voices of indigenous researchers, both women and men, who are in a position to represent ←5 | 6→their cultures from within. This is the surest way to approach a complete picture of this type of society.

Firstly, my work has followed these sources, making comparative studies of as many currently existing societies as possible in order to understand them and find their common denominators despite their great differences, seeking it on four societal levels: economic, social, political, and cultural. This means that the new definition of “matriarchy” was not presumed in abstraction and thus—as was often customary in the past—projected onto the field of research. Instead, it was developed inductively, step by step, through analytical observation of these societies one after the other. During this process, an explicit and systematic definition of “matriarchy” gradually developed, reflecting the deep structure of the matriarchal societal form, on the four levels mentioned, which is common to all existing societies of this type. For that reason I call it a "structural definition."

This structural definition, summarized here in extreme conceptual brevity, asserts that the *matriarchal form of society*

- is, on the economic level, a society of *balanced economic reciprocity*, in which women manage essential goods such as land, houses, and food, and pay constant attention to balancing the economy through distribution; such an economy does not accumulate but distribute the goods by gift-giving, so it can be called a "gift economy"[8];
- is, on the social level, based on *matrilineal kinship*, whose main features are clan organization based on matrilineality (kinship in the mother's line) and matrilocality (residence with or near the mother); at the same time the *sexes are valued equally* (gender equality);
- represents, on the political level, a *society of consensus*, based on local politics in the clan houses and a system of male delegates as spokesmen of their clans at larger, external gatherings that gives the men their own sphere of activity and social status; in most cases, this results not only in a gender-egalitarian society, but also in a fully *egalitarian society*;
- is based, on the cultural level, on a *sacred culture* with complex, religious and ideological systems, the belief in rebirth forms the basic notion of life on earth and in the cosmos. There are no aloof male gods, but the worldview is defined by *the feminine divine* in its many manifestations; ←6 | 7→it is understood not as transcendent, but immanent to the world. That is, the whole world is regarded as feminine divine, which includes the masculine.[9]

In short, in this definition, the necessary conditions required in order to speak of a matriarchal society are matrilineality and, in the economic realm, women's power over distribution. At the same time, gender equality prevails, expressed in the principle of consensus in decision-making, from which no one is excluded.

If these features appear in an existing society, then one can speak of a “matriarchy.” Matrilineality is necessary and indispensable because it not only gives structure to the whole society, but through the matrilineal genealogy also includes the ancestors, back to the first clan mother. Gender equality is indispensable because it indicates that, despite the central position of women, matriarchal societies do not acknowledge gender hierarchy, but that all sexes have equal value and each has its own sphere of activity. Thus, women are socially at the center of society, while men are the political representatives of the clans and societies to the outside world.[10] Both spheres of action are different, but are considered equivalent and related to each other in reciprocal ways. Matriarchal societies, then, are not mirror images of patriarchy.

However, matrilineality and gender-equality alone would not suffice to characterize a society as a “matriarchy” in the absence of women’s economic power of distribution. This, too, is necessary, because it is precisely this that produces the matriarchal balanced economy. It goes very much against our way of thinking to imagine that the power of economic distribution could lead to a balanced economy where there are no rich and poor, and where general prosperity is the rule. But this reciprocity derives from the value system of matriarchal societies, where maternal behavior is seen as the prototypical activity: it therefore includes the maternal value of caring for and nurturing all members of the society, different as they may be, which means respect for diversity; the value of equilibrium and balance among all segments of society through perfect reciprocity; the value of all members of the society to have a right to a say through the consensus principle, resulting in gender and generation equality; the value of securing peace through communication and negotiation during crises, while avoiding violence; and, last but not least, the value of respecting the variety of life forms and the natural cycles of life.[11] The result is a society with *structured, complementary equality*, without hierarchy on the one hand, and without false “egalitarianism” on the other, a society, which integrates within its natural environment in the best way possible.

It makes sense, however, to include in the definition not only the necessary, but also some sufficient conditions, that is, non-necessary qualities that don’t need to be fulfilled but still are suited to this type of society. They enrich the definition through their variety, and through their variability reveal the differences in existing matriarchal societies. As an example, matrilocality, residence with or near the mother, is only a sufficient condition, meaning it may be present, but does not need to be. There are thus different patterns of residence in existing matriarchal societies, but these change nothing with regard to their matriarchal character.

The structural definition of “matriarchy” sketched above derives from the combination of necessary and sufficient conditions. It comprehends its field of research, here the matriarchal form of society, in its deeper coherence, in the inner connections that consistently bind all its parts together. It is precisely these consistent inner connections that yield its deep structure. The goal is to develop a differentiated, appropriate tool for scientific investigation of an extremely complex field of research, namely of an entire societal form (operational approach). But it is not about a fixed, unchangeable “ideal type” that is abstractly established and under which everything is subsumed.[12] Because the further development of this structural definition, as the field of modern Matriarchal Studies evolves, is an open, creative process inviting the participation of many researchers. The crucial test of the correctness of modern Matriarchal Studies is the exact and sensitive grasp of existing matriarchal societies in all their diversity, without getting lost in a thousand details.[13]

Modern Matriarchal Studies and Its Relevance for History of Cultures

Modern Matriarchal Studies originated in recent decades and has advanced rapidly. My pioneering work (since 1978) provided the field with a scientific foundation, without which it could not have accomplished its wide-ranging mission. This mission consists of creating an adequate representation of the matriarchal form of society in all its enormous historical and geographical breadth. Providing a scientific foundation includes:

- first, formulating an *adequate definition* of “matriarchy” which reflects, in short, the necessary conditions and gives in detail the deep structure of this societal form;
- second, developing an *explicit methodology* able to discover and analyse all phenomena within the field of research, that is, the matriarchal form of society;
- third, developing a *theoretical framework* that can integrate an enormous quantity of material without contradictions, thereby grasping the great breadth of the matriarchal form of society systematically.

The first requirement for a scientific foundation was met by the above-mentioned structural definition with its necessary and sufficient conditions for “matriarchy.”

The second requirement was met by explicitly specifying a valid methodology for this research. In traditional matriarchal research, a special methodology was nowhere described. For modern Matriarchal Studies, I showed very early on that such a methodology must rest on two pillars: a broad interdisciplinarity and a thorough critique of ideology.

Regarding interdisciplinarity, to understand an entire form of society together with its history, it is simply indispensable. It allows us to eliminate the fragmentation of knowledge that comes from the process of splitting into traditional disciplines, a fragmentation that obscures greater connections. Unlike the approach taken in these disciplines, it is not more expertise that matters, but the recognition and integration of social and historical connections from the various, relevant branches of research.[14] The interdisciplinarity required here encompasses ←9 | 10→no less than the totality of the humanities and social sciences, and also occasional findings from some of the natural sciences.

The critique of ideology also requires a method, so as not to lose itself once more in opaque ideology. As early as 1978 I sketched out such a method, and later I provided a fuller version.[15] It utilized both negative and positive processes. The negative process identified the typical prejudices concerning matriarchy found everywhere in the scholarly literature, to the point of self-contradiction. Interdisciplinarity is very helpful here, since comparing expert opinions from various disciplines—or even within a single discipline—reveals incomplete, one-sided, and distorted representations. The positive process critically evaluates factual findings of traditional matriarchy research that have been liberated from these prejudices. Though these findings remain disconnected in traditional research, they can be integrated into the theoretical framework of modern Matriarchal Studies, where they find their logically proper place.

The third requirement is to develop this theoretical framework for modern Matriarchal Studies. It must be broad enough to integrate consistently all phenomena of the research field of matriarchal societies, by being able to provide empirically confirmed explanations. Producing such a theory would not mean formulating a closed system—this would be a traditional and outdated philosophical position. Instead, it is necessary to provide a systematic yet open framework that could be used to clarify and support actual individual research.

This theory began as a research program and has been carried out step by step: In the first step of developing the matriarchy theory, I provided an overview of previous studies of matriarchy up to the present. There I followed the history of the field using exemplary cases drawn from both scientific and political discussions. What became apparent was the lack of any clear and complete definition of "matriarchy" and the massive doses of patriarchal ideology.[16]

For that reason, in the second step of developing the theory of matriarchy I formulated the complete structural definition of "matriarchy," which was urgently needed, and described the necessary and sufficient conditions of this societal form. It was derived step by step, not through abstraction but through ←10 | 11→induction from a vast amount of anthropological material, by analysis of as many existing societies as possible of this type using the “trial-and-error” method. These societies, which I found in Asia, Africa and America, were presented within a worldwide context for the first time.[17] A research trip was also carried out to one of these societies,[18] as well as numerous contacts with researchers from these indigenous societies, whose knowledge I owe much to. In that way, today’s matriarchal societies, otherwise obscured by prejudices and theories of patriarchal scholarship, have come to light again, providing us with a complete picture of what “matriarchy” is.

The third step in developing the theory of matriarchy is to take the thus formulated explicit definition of “matriarchy” as a scientific tool to address cultural history and to test how far it goes—which is what I have done with this book for the cultural areas of West Asia and Europe. In doing so, our detailed knowledge and deep understanding of matriarchal social structures, gained from anthropology and acting as the background, is not simply projected onto cultural history. Instead, it is compared with archaeological finds to see whether they might reveal anything new or different to what has been previously assumed. The archaeological finds still form the basis, but are now “made to talk,” i.e. interpreted in a new way. The problem with archaeological interpretation to date is that those unfamiliar with any form of society other than patriarchy will always tend to unconsciously or consciously project patriarchal patterns backward onto cultural history.[19] But this prevents any deeper understanding because one remains in familiar and never-changing territory.

In recent archeology, findings from anthropology are sometimes included to better understand early historical patterns. However, the choice is random and arbitrary, so that patriarchalized, indigenous societies are also used to help explain phenomena which nevertheless cannot be understood in this way. Unaware of the big difference in regard to matriarchal, indigenous societies, the approach remains within the patriarchal mindset. In my research I develop and reveal the *cultural* *history of the matriarchal form of society.* Consequently, as comparative examples, I have only used those existing, indigenous matriarchal societies which ←11 | 12→I have researched and presented in the second part of this theory. This is not explicitly mentioned every time, but is logically assumed. Such a background leads to quite a different interpretation for many archaeological finds and results than previously reached. But it is precisely these archaeological finds and data, along with the earliest written evidence, that provide the only solid basis on which matriarchal cultural history can be reclaimed, beyond imaginative speculation.

As with the anthropological part of modern Matriarchal Studies, cultural-historical research already contains outstanding individual studies and critical opinions by female archaeologists on which I have relied. I have also visited almost all the archaeological sites in West Europe mentioned in this book, as well as some in West Asia, and have approached them without the bias of the usual theories. As a result, I hope that, in the “light of theory,” all this will gain in depth, meaning, and context, and that a completely new perspective will emerge, ultimately leading to a revision of human cultural history. This new interpretation of cultural history is an issue today because patriarchal interpretation is increasingly proving to be one-sided and inaccurate, as well as being restricted to the four to five millennia of patriarchal history. Consequently, and for the first time, in the “light of theory,” it will become possible to recognize human cultural history adequately, undistorted by patriarchal bias.

The fourth step in developing the theory of matriarchy deals with the problem of patriarchy’s origin. Two important questions must be answered here. First, how and where were patriarchal patterns first able to establish themselves? Second, how were patriarchal societies able thereafter to spread throughout the world? The spreading of patriarchy after the appearance of the first patriarchal groups was not at all self-evident, and it was a long process, lasting throughout the patriarchal millennia up to the present time, evidenced by the matriarchal societies still existing today.

As I see it, these two questions have not yet been adequately answered. Instead, many pseudo- or incomplete explanations have been proposed. Those who wish to explain the emergence of patriarchy first need a thorough familiarity with the societal form that preceded it, namely matriarchy. Such knowledge is the prerequisite for being able to explain the emergence of patriarchy at all. Without it, one sets out from the false premises given within the patriarchal context of oneself.

It is essential for a theory of patriarchy's origin to explain why patriarchal patterns arose in different places, on different continents, at different times, and under different circumstances. It will emerge that the integration of human societies within the world of nature, today simply called "ecology," played a decisive ←12 | 13→role, be it as a success or failure. The latter may have been due to nature disrupting these societies or, conversely, by humans disrupting nature. The answers will be very different for different regions of the world, because the landscapes of the earth and their conditions for the existence of human societies are extremely diverse and, moreover, changeable. As far as I can see, no one has yet undertaken this task. Instead, monocausal explanations have been offered that supposedly explain worldwide processes spanning millennia based on a single cause, which is why they are useless. In order to exclude such speculation, the solid basis of archaeological finds and results and earlier written testimonies should never be abandoned. Natural science has also carried out research into the climate and geophysical conditions of the past millennia which can provide extremely important information.

In this book I have used these methods to explain the first emergence of patriarchal patterns in the vast cultural regions of West Asia and Europe. Additionally, I have outlined the further development of patriarchy in those two world regions in order to show the waves through which it came to prevail as "history from above," since the patriarchalization process was long-lasting and never fully completed. It must also be shown how the concurrent "history from below" appeared as continuous resistance against various waves of patriarchalization, an approach that yields a completely different picture of this development. This is the history of women, the lower social classes, the subcultures, and the marginalized cultures. For the cultural regions of West Asia and Europe, I have been able to do just that with a few examples in order not to exceed the given framework.

A theory of matriarchy incorporates all of this, entailing a complete change of perspective on society and history, or, in other words, a paradigm change. As a new paradigm—in spite of its systematics—it does not represent a closed system, and—in spite of its far-reaching explanations—it does not make any universal statements about content. Instead, it provides a comprehensive framework that can be taken up and developed by other scholars for their own research. Nevertheless, the theory, as far as it has been partially developed here, is well-substantiated in empirical terms and its statements are therefore robust. Any further, scientifically-based investigation within this framework will increase its empirical content. This process is typical for a new paradigm, which cannot be fulfilled by a single person. The brevity with which the social and cultural-historical analyses occur in this framework already shows that they are primarily paradigmatic examples. In this context a multitude of new projects are revealed. In a paradigm's early stages, it must leave such gaps, as it is not its role to function ←13 | 14→as a lexicon. Its achievement is the creation of a more far-reaching explanatory framework from a viewpoint that differs from what was previously known.

From the above-mentioned parts of the matriarchal theory, we can see that the reach of the matriarchy paradigm is enormous. This new paradigm not only includes the entirety of known cultural history and—especially when combined with the analysis of patriarchy—the varied societal forms of the present. From the methodological viewpoint it also affects the content of all the cultural and social sciences, as I have shown in various places.[20] So it is my hope that generations of scholars will continue to work creatively with the matriarchal paradigm for as long as it takes to make it a part of the general consciousness and public knowledge.

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1 See *Langenscheidts Taschenwörterbuch Griechisch − Deutsch*, Berlin Schöneberg 1961, Langenscheidt KG, p. 70, col.1, p. 178, col.1.

2 The Iroquois of North America, the Minangkabau in Sumatra, the Mosuo in Southwest China refer to themselves in this way; see Barbara Mann, Peggy Reeves Sanday, and Lamu Gatusa, in Heide Goettner-Abendroth (ed.): *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present and Future (Selected Papers of the First and Second World Congresses on Matriarchal Studies 2003 and 2005),* Toronto 2009, Inanna Publications, York University.

3 This happened at three "World Congresses on Matriarchal Studies": 2003 in Luxembourg, 2005 in Texas/USA and 2011 in Switzerland; the latter also focusing on "Matriarchal Politics." See Op. cit.

4 Johann Jakob Bachofen: *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, New Jersey 1967, Princeton University Press.

5 Lewis Henry Morgan: *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois*, Rochester, New York 1851/1871/1877, Sage and Brother; reprinted 1965. New edition: Secaucus, New York 1996, Carol Publishing.

6 See Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies. Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe*, New York 2012/2013, Peter Lang, 1–42.

7 This means that I also include matriarchal societies which have been destroyed provided they had been recorded in anthropological eyewitness accounts (such as the Iroquois Society).

8 Genevieve Vaughan: *For-Giving: A Feminist Critique of Exchange*, Austin 1997, Plain View and Anomaly Press; Genevieve Vaughan (ed.): *Women and the Gift Economy,* Toronto 2007, Inanna Publications, York University.

9 For a more detailed account of the characteristics of this definition, see Heide Goettner-Abendroth: "The Deep Structure of Matriarchal Society," in: *Societies of Peace*, ed. Goettner-Abendroth, 17–28.

10 Compare also Peggy Reeves Sanday: *Female Power and Male Dominance*, New York 1981, Cambridge University Press. Sanday shows here that female authority is based on the economic and social centrality of women's role, while men exercise political leadership, though it does not imply dominance.

11 For more on maternal values in matriarchal societies see Heide Goettner-Abendroth: "Matriarchy," in: *Encyclopedia on Mothering*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly, Toronto 2008, Demeter Press, York University.

12 The opinion that this is an "ideal type" is based on traditional social philosophy. Modern philosophy of science criticizes such traditional positions. It is neither based on ideal-typical determinations nor on any universals, but its task is to provide scientific tools.

13 For more detail on the logic of definition, see the introduction to *Matriarchal Societies*. Also Heide Goettner-Abendroth: "Die philosophischen Grundlagen der Modernen Matriarchatsforschung," in: *Verantwortung, Anteilnahme, Dissidenz: Patriarchatskritik als Verteidigung des Lebendigen. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Claudia von Werlhof*, ed. Mathias Behmann et al., Frankfurt a.M. 2013, Peter Lang.

14 Based on a critical history of Matriarchal Studies, I have shown the variety of research areas that must be consulted in order to do justice to this topic. For the development of the theory, the relevant research areas must be systematically related to one another. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 1: "A Critical History of Perspectives on Matriarchy."

15 Heide Goettner-Abendroth: "Zur Methodologie der Frauenforschung am Beispiel eines Theorie des Matriarchats," in: *Dokumentation der Tagung "Frauenforschung in den Sozialwissenschaften,"* Munich 1978, Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI); Heide Goettner-

Abendroth: *Das Matriarchat I. Geschichte seiner Erforschung*, Stuttgart 1995 (3.), Kohlhammer, 14–33, and in its entirety.

16 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 1.

17 Op. cit., in its entirety.

18 Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchat in Südchina. Eine Forschungsreise zu den Mosuo*, Stuttgart 1998, Kohlhammer. Reprint in E-version, Stuttgart 2017, Kohlhammer.

19 This applies to the ways of lives of both women and men, as the role of men in non-patriarchal societies has not been understood at all in patriarchal archeology and cultural historiography. See Lisbeth Skogstrand: "Is Androcentric Archaeology Really About Men?" *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress 2010*, Vol. 7, No. 1, April 2011, Museum of Cultural History, University Oslo/Norway.

20 Heide Goettner-Abendroth: "Matriarchal Society: Definition and Theory," in: *The Gift*, ed. Genevieve Vaughan, Rome 2004, Meltemi, Athanor Books.

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The New Ideology of "Eternal War": Critical Reflections on Early History

Preliminary Remarks on the Concept of History

When we speak here of "history," a different understanding of history from the usual one is implied. We view history as everything that has been created socially and culturally by humans or, in other words, the cultural history of humanity. The demeaning term "prehistory," still used by many archaeologists and historians, excludes all cultures prior to what has been officially accepted as "history" and relegates them to the realm of the provisional and primitive. In this way cultural creations from the earliest and longest human eochs are slighted in exactly the same way that we find in Western civilization's prevailing Eurocentric attitudes vis-à-vis non-Western indigenous cultures, which have also been called "primitive" or "exotic."

The general explanation for this is that cultures with no written language are "prehistoric." This, however, is a very unclear, dubious criterion, for what kind of writing do they mean? Does it refer only to phonetic script as we know it today? If so, all cultures with pictorial writing would be "prehistoric," meaning that the ancient cultures of Egypt and China, which flourished for thousands of years, would be excluded from “proper” history. But no one would make this claim, ←15 | 16→since both Egypt and China are considered part of history because their pictorial scripts are regarded as “writing.” By this standard the circle of cultures with writing would be substantially enlarged: those cultures possessing only simple pictorial scripts would also belong to history. Such early or simple kinds of writing generally have religious content; they are used for prayers, votive gifts, and often as mnemonic aids in complicated rituals.[1]

Furthermore, this interpretation implies an unacceptable diminishment of early humanity’s intellectual achievements. Scholars have studied the stereotypical appearance of abstract symbols on thousands of Neolithic art objects across all of West Asia and Europe and interpreted their religious meaning.[2] Similar progress has been made with regard to the abstract symbols found combined with paintings in Palaeolithic caves of France. These symbols are also codes for the worldview of that time and were carried over into the Neolithic.[3] These abstract symbols are the oldest script we know, and document the fact that humans have always used writing. This shows that the use of writing as a criterion to separate “history” from everything that came before is arbitrary and thus not useful.

But this conceptual separation is about something else. It is striking that, according to this approach, “history” always only begins with the establishment of classically patriarchal patterns: hierarchical social structures with dominant men at the top; a subordinate status for women and other population groups; the formation of territorial states with dogmatic state religions. As the criterion of writing is applied in this view, the first documents that qualify as “writing” are those where rulers and kings had their warlike feats and merciless laws chiseled in stone. Structures of this kind are hailed as great achievements and the beginning of civilization, in comparison with which all else is given the prefix “pre-,” implying “provisional” and “worthless.” This concept of history is therefore highly tendentious, i.e. marked by the ideology of patriarchal dominance.

←16 | 17→We do not follow this pattern. Instead, we include in human history all cultural achievements of women and men from the very beginning. It is helpful here to use the terms “primeval” or “early history,” also used by archaeologists, because they refer to time sequences and do not imply value judgments.

The Discourse of “Eternal War” among Theoreticians

Nowadays the vocabulary of war dominates everyday language, just as violence and war dominate the media. Internet games bring violence and war into our living rooms and even into the rooms of children, with the result that not only the world, but also our minds are occupied with ever-present war. When there is no hot war, “cold war” holds sway, meaning that, in principle, people speak of war without the consideration of peace. This way of thinking, in which war predominates, perceives of peace as nothing more than the absence of war, and sees it as the result of rules of conflict, for example, when the victors allow a “graveyard peace” or dictate ceasefires and treaties—just as if peace and peace building do not follow their own rules. The result is an extreme devaluation of peace, as if it were nothing but the consequence of weakness, retreat, and defeat. This creates a mentality that still sees war as the “father of all and the king of all” and exalts it as something glorious.[4] Even among scholars, the current fashion is to look everywhere for violence and war. This applies to both indigenous societies and early epochs of human history such as the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, which until recently were considered peaceful.

The war theorist with an archeological background, *Lawrence Keeley*, set the benchmark for this view:[5] he sees “war” raging among humans everywhere and at all times, including in indigenous non-state societies located beyond the boundaries of hierarchical state-based civilizations and in primeval and early historical societies that long predate these. Previously, war had only been linked to states based on domination and military organization, in which the rulers had a monopoly on violence;

Keeley, however, now sees an eternal battleground. He regards peace as a precarious exception: although all humans love it—especially women, who must bear the primary burdens of war—its occurrence is quite rare ←17 | 18→and requires special treaties.[6] With this argument he tries to refute the view held by many archaeologists and ethnologists who work from the proposition that war was generally rare and insignificant in early history and among indigenous peoples, and that peaceful behavior was the general rule. These scholars are subjected to rebuke and sarcastic commentary throughout Keeley's book.

To achieve his goal, Keeley interprets every wall and ditch around a Neolithic village as a "fortification" of a military sort[7]—though these were more likely to be defenses against wild animals and other things. Graves with flint arrowheads no longer contain funeral gifts for the dead; instead the arrowheads are "murder instruments" among the bones[8]—leaving almost no one who might have died a natural death. Even the famous ice man from the Austrian Alps, popularly known as "Frozen Fritz," with his bow and arrows, dagger, and axe, was supposedly carrying "weapons of war"[9]—although his bow and arrows are best suited for hunting chamois, his dagger for butchering them, and the axe for cutting the trees used for Neolithic houses, except for the ice man's copper axe which was an object of prestige. Keeley's hypotheses have greatly influenced contemporary archaeology. Seen through his lens, graves with unusual accumulations of bones, some orderly, some in confused disorder, are without exception evidence of "massacres," and thus of "war." And so he already finds "war" in the Palaeolithic era (for example, in the Jebel Sahaba graveyard in Nubian Egypt, 14,000–12,000 BCE, according to Gordon Childe).[10] In Central Europe, "war" was already raging at the latest from the Mesolithic era (for example, the dead in the large Ofnet Cave in Bavaria, around 7700 BCE), and the entire Neolithic is filled with "war" (for example, the mass grave of Talheim in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany, around 5100 BCE), which leads without interruption to the "warlike" Copper and Bronze Ages (for example, the mass grave of Roaix in France, around 2000 BCE).[11] Thus "war" in early history is literally invoked, and insofar as it was supposedly a constant presence, one might wonder how humanity could actually have survived.

Indigenous peoples fare no better. According to Keeley, they go so far as to wage “total war,” since warfare in these societies, he claims, is exceedingly effective, when one compares their small numbers with the numbers of those killed. They, too, are supposedly constantly at war, as shown by the Brazilian Yanomami, the North American Iroquois, and the South Indian Nayar.[12]—Aside from the fact that very different societies are thrown together here, the different reasons for this supposed “endless war” are unclear: could it perhaps have been caused not by internal conflicts, but by pressure from the outside, such as invasions and colonization, newly introduced illnesses, or the exodus of entire populations?[13] In addition, the homicide rates he cites are dubious, since they are extrapolated according to year and population, while the many peaceful years are discounted.

Just as unclear as these assertions is Keeley’s definition of “war.” He calls it “armed conflict between societies,”[14] but he does not distinguish between war and other uses of weapons. Far more precise is the definition of *Harry H. Turney-High*, who differentiates between “primitive war” and “civilized war.”[15] According to him, “primitive war” shows only a weak mobilization of fighters, because it depends on volunteers; supplies and logistics are inadequate, so only campaigns limited to a few days are possible; the fighters have no organized training, are unprofessional, and their motivation is fleeting, so that command authority is weak; weapons and fortifications are weak, tactics ineffective, and principles of war neglected.

These criteria, however, do not describe “war,” or even “primitive war.” Instead, they characterize ethnic conflicts carried out as “feuds.” Precisely this capriciousness and brevity characterize feuds; they are quick to flare up and quick to die down again. They are personally motivated conflicts on a small scale, as in the case of retribution used to implement unwritten laws.[16] A feud is a kind of self-help in tribal societies where there are no formal legal institutions to balance competing interests.[17] Causes of feuds could be insult, robbery, or conflict over resources like water, hunting-grounds, and grazing lands. In addition, if feuds arise among indigenous peoples, not all men capable of fighting participate, but only a leader with his followers, a small group that represents all other members ←19 | 20→ of the tribe. The goal is never to eradicate the enemy. More often, proxy battles between the leaders take place, and with the death of one leader the fight is usually over, due to the symbolic effect; this indicates that such ritualized victory is meant to cause the fewest possible casualties.[18]

Among groups and tribes in early history, such feuds concerning resources or persons certainly existed as isolated violence arising from weakness, due to the fact that no other solution was available. But this does not amount to "war," or a "warlike" society, or even a "warlike" epoch. For "war" as carried out by civilizations structured as hierarchical states is different. It is an institution, that is, an organized undertaking on a large scale that presupposes a standing military with strict discipline and command authority. It can be waged for the long term and, unlike a spontaneous feud, can lead to devastating destruction. War as organization serves to conquer territory, destroy enemies, and secure dominance, all of which a feud cannot accomplish. This kind of dominance in civilized state societies always means patriarchy.

Now we have arrived at an exact and adequate *definition* of "war," on the one hand, and "feud," on the other. The basis for every serious scholarly activity is the most precise and adequate definitions possible in the area being researched and written about. Without them, it is impossible to know exactly what is really being discussed.

This is why it is not acceptable to designate every ethnic conflict, past or present, as "primitive war," and to equate it with "state-based war." To do so is unscientific and only opens the floodgates for problems that are ideological and thus avoidable. The massive role ideology plays here can be seen in the fact that people treat violence and war as natural, arising from human, meaning male, nature. But such essentialist definitions of human nature are fundamentally false because there is no way to confirm them. As it happens, "human beings" differ widely. "Male beings" are not warlike by nature, either, as men in peaceful societies past and present have shown us, including individual men in our own modern patriarchal society. Warfare is not an innate necessity, but an invention.[19] With an ←20 | 21→ideology of "eternal war" one only avoids the ethical responsibility to act with all one's strength in the here and now for peace and an end to wars.[20]

The Discourse of "Eternal War" among Archaeologists

We now turn to the experts, who uncover material findings from those early epochs, and take a closer look: archaeologists. They adhere to the discoveries they make in their excavations, the human skeletal remains, ruins of built structures, and cultural artefacts, which they use to support their theories and avoid overstated interpretations. This, at least, is what they claim. But we soon see that there is plenty of audacious interpretation, since this unearthed ancient material is too fragmentary to be self-explanatory. Some interpretations are cautious, others quite daring, but they always arise from one's own social background, which is, naturally one's own patriarchal form of society. In consequence, a number of archaeologists project "eternal patriarchy" with all its manifestations, especially "eternal war," onto their interpretation of human history. In this they are more often guided by their theoretical presuppositions and prejudices than by their material, which often only serves to confirm theories they arrived at by other means. Lately Keeley's theory of war has played an important role, since his overly simple definition of "war" allows everybody to claim that war is a widespread phenomenon, dominant since the earliest times.[21]

Before we turn to the idea of "eternal war," that pillar of patriarchy, let us first examine how "eternal patriarchy" is constructed. For this, a new standard work for all teachers and students of archaeology that appeared in 2009 will serve our purpose: the *Atlas der Vorgeschichte* (Atlas of Prehistory), which is well appointed with photos and maps.[22] Written by authors who know the field well, this work is nonetheless astonishing in that it appears to be completely unaffected by all the criticism that has long been expressed, since, despite its laudable breadth of knowledge, it contains massive amounts of patriarchal ideology. The Neolithic is ←21 | 22→immediately linked to “social inequality” because the new way of farming, with cultivation and animal husbandry, caused an “immense growth in population,” accompanied at the same time by “private ownership of land and houses.” This then led to “social differences and social problems,” which would lead to “uncontrolled upheavals” and “emigration.” [23]

This description of the Neolithic conditions is amazing as it is not lacking in imagination, but in concrete archaeological evidence. The population growth was hardly “immense” when compared to the few settlements in the vast amount of land; this is why people might not have emigrated and dispersed due to “uncontrolled upheavals” − which should probably be called “disputes.” But rather there was also peaceful emigration, such as when a daughter’s line separated itself from the mother clan to establish a new village on new land. This is a natural process of dispersal that is still reflected in the German terms “Mutterstadt” (mother city) and “Tochterstadt” (daughter city). There is nothing to prove that the driver of all emigration is “social problems,” along with conflict and struggle; this is pure projection.

The case is not much better for “private property.” Yet this concept serves a particular view of humans, as we shall see. For as the story goes, with the help of this supposed private property, there came to be “emphasis on the individual” with the “dominance of particular people.” Under their direction the great megalithic structures were built “in order to take possession of the landscape.” And, furthermore, wooded land clearance and livestock farming led to “a considerable degree of environmental destruction,” which was the “origin of global climate change.” [24]

Here we encounter the strange idea of the Neolithic Age as the source of all evil.[25] And already, this early on, the “Big Man” appears who even lays claim to the countryside because he can only think in terms of private property. The “Big Man” also creates the megalithic architecture—completely unproven—for himself alone, as opposed to the idea that it was a community project for the communal use of whole clans. Yet we must speak up in his defense, because it remains a mystery how he could have set global climate change in motion with merely isolated settlements in the vast forest and a few domestic animals, compared to the much larger herds of wild animals. But for some people this idea provides ←22 | 23→psychological relief, since the destruction of the environment was already present in the Neolithic and one can lay the blame for the present-day disaster at the feet of the “Big Man” and his people.

With regard to the Neolithic, the story continues in this style: as soon as the first cities appear, they “visibly dominate the landscape from their hilltop settlements.” It must be that they dominate because, due to the differentiation of the activities practiced there, they are “hierarchically planned and ordered centers of power.” For this, naturally, they need “fortifications” of walls and ditches, since the chiefs of the cities “control” the important trade routes of the region.[26]

It is a popular prejudice that greater division of labor and social differentiation automatically lead to hierarchy and domination—which has not been proven. Such a hierarchization does not occur even when there is a broad division of labor, as long as different kinds of work are seen as having equal value, and for this there is plenty of evidence in indigenous societies.[27] This sudden “hierarchization” along with its “centers of power” is simply fabricated due to the fact that no one is able to visualize trade except as monopolized and controlled by dominant figures—exactly as it exists today in the capitalist money economy with worldwide trade monopolies. But can it be that the people in the Neolithic had no accumulative economy based on money and interest, so there was nothing to control? Maybe the so-called “trade routes” were rather for communication, in part to visit and bring gifts to friends and exchange goods, in part to make pilgrimages to sacred places?

The situation is no better with regard to the ditches and walls. They are all said to be “fortifications,” as if a warlike enemy were everywhere outside the gates waiting to violently appropriate this invented “power.” But these could just as well be ditches to drain the settlement area in damp regions or walls for protection against flooding and mud from nearby rivers; and likewise, they offered the inhabitants protection from wild animals. The ditches could also have had religious functions as burial places, and the walls for separation from the spirits occupying the world outside. Evidence exists for these functions. In view of the many possibilities, then, a sentence like: “Violence between villages increases in exact proportion to the ditch systems”[28] is completely incomprehensible. What do the beautiful oval or circular earthworks of the Neolithic Age in Central Europe have to do with “violence,” unless one is determined to see violence here ←23 | 24→at all costs? In the meantime, a view is gaining ground that these earthworks had astronomical, social, and ceremonial functions as gathering places, as a kind of open-air temple. Now the “Big Man” immediately mutates into a priest who has religious monopoly here and “controls access rights to the ritual places.” [29]

This is purely an assertion for which no evidence is presented. However, it suits the projection of our familiar patriarchal conditions backwards onto the Neolithic Age. What follows is more of the same. Through the Copper and Bronze Ages to the Iron Age, the story continues one-dimensionally, with the ever-increasing potency of centers of power and domination. With regard to the Bronze and Iron Age, for example, the trivialization of warlike violence is notable, as if bronze and iron weapons had only spread through Europe according to the principle of import—imitation—manufacture, that is, only by means of friendly transfer and not through foreign invasions.[30] In the end, it all culminates in the state, from the Greek city states to the Roman military empire, whereby all of early history, led by ever-greater iterations of the “Big Man,” has finally reached its goal: civilization with its ruling elites. Nowhere does it occur to this group of writers that societies in early history might have looked quite different from “eternal patriarchy.” Claims of eternal patriarchy would require proof, but this cannot be achieved if the end result is presupposed from the very beginning.

The situation is no better with the theory of “eternal war,” which is popular with more than a few archaeologists. In their work, dubious ethnological representations are uncritically adopted to interpret findings, especially human skeletons. Instead of an appropriately meticulous analysis of these finds, articles of belief are formulated because the archaeological finds themselves provide no proof of “eternal war.” It is worth taking a closer look at this problem, and in doing so I follow the critical discussion of *Heidi Peter-Roecher*, a professor of archaeology.[31]

The claim is made that “war” was already notorious in the Middle Palaeolithic, as allegedly shown by the case of Krapina in the North of Croatia. In this region, under an outcropping of the hill Hušnjak, the remains of around 70 Neanderthals were found. The age of the find was dated at 130,000 years. The ←24 | 25→bones show traces of cuts and scraping, as well as further signs of violence, leading immediately to the hypothesis that here Aurignacians, a type of early modern humans, encountered Neanderthals, defeated them, and then ate them. This is the gruesome but ever-popular “cannibalism” hypothesis, which denigrates the supposedly “primitive” very early humans as eaters of human flesh. This hypothesis has long haunted the field of archaeology.—But this scenario can have a completely different interpretation: it points to a death ritual common in the Palaeolithic Age and the millennia thereafter, the custom of “secondary burial,” in which the dead were first buried individually, and after the soft tissue had decayed, the bones were exhumed, cleaned and separated, then gathered together at a sacred place for a second burial with a distinct ceremony. This custom is well documented in ethnology; it expresses the loving care kin exhibit for their dead. The further “indications of violence” result from the dynamite used at the time (1899 CE) when the bones were blasted from the hard ground—a very special recovery method![32]

Further indications of war in the Upper Palaeolithic (from 38,000 BCE) are supposedly the “massacres” of Grimaldi in North Italy, Dolní

Věstonice in Moravia (Czech Republic) and other examples. But these cases are all instances of multiple burials. With Grimaldi and Dolní Věstonice, there are even claims of “mass sacrifices,” a dramatic idea that is not, however, supported by the finds. It is always possible that a number of people died from famine or an epidemic at the same time and were buried together. Another possibility would be the later deposition of bones in certain places, i.e. secondary burials, as critical analysis has shown.[33]

“Human sacrifice and cannibalism” were also attributed to the Mesolithic Age (from 9500), for example in the large Ofnet Cave in Bavaria (around 7700). Thirty-four skulls were found there, collected together as if in a nest. They were thought to have traces of cuts and scrapes, but these could not be found in more recent examinations. This was instead a secondary burial of the cleaned and carefully arranged skulls, which were deposited in the Ofnet Cave, an especially sacred place.[34]

In the early Neolithic, this scenario supposedly played out in an especially horrifying way in the *Jungfernhoehle* (Virgin’s Cave) of Tiefenellern, near Bamberg ←25 | 26→ in Bavaria (about 5000). Here skeleton parts of 49 individuals were found, most of them young women and girls. Once again, traces of scrapes and cuts on the bones and crushed skulls gave rise to the hypothesis of gruesome feasts. In 1990, the Virgin’s Cave was still infamous among experts as the “Cannibal Cave.” In addition, there was a strange legend of three headless virgins haunting the forest at night, having been beheaded long ago in the cave.[35] Both this legend and the cave’s name are noteworthy, because they show how events from early history, even though distorted, can be preserved for an inconceivably long time in mythic guise.—Meanwhile, the Virgin’s Cave is now also seen as a Neolithic cultic cave, where no traces of cannibalism can be found. Here, too, ceremonial secondary burials of the female bones were celebrated, which proves that, for millennia, the cave was a cultic site of exceptional significance.[36] Moreover, no indications of human violence could be found. Instead, falling stones damaged the skulls long after their burial.[37]

Nowadays the hypothesis of the purportedly broad distribution of “human sacrifice and cannibalism,” which made early humans appear to be bloodthirsty savages, is considered passé. But it has been replaced by the hypothesis of “war and massacre,” where another kind of slaughter is projected backward into the earliest epochs of humanity. Since, due to the absence of relevant findings, the war hypothesis cannot be upheld for the Palaeolithic, now it is the Neolithic that is made responsible for “war and massacre.”

Let us now look at how that proposition holds up. We have already heard that “private ownership of land and houses” resulted from agriculture and settlement. Consequently, property had to be “defended” and “war” had to be waged. This situation, it is said, already began with the stone perimeter walls of Jericho in ancient Palestine (from 9000), which were interpreted as “fortifications” suggestive of warlike times. The same martial function is stereotypically attributed to all earthworks with walls and ditches throughout the Neolithic.—But there are many reasons to fortify a place without immediately putting up a military fortress. For a long time, the Neolithic city of Jericho in the Jordan valley had no walls, and thereafter only a minor ring of walls serving more as protection from excess water in the muddy terrain. Only later was it expanded to a mighty 3-m-thick wall with a tower. Other wall and ditch constructions could have been enclosures ←26 | 27→for humans and livestock to shut out predators, or protections for gardens against crop loss to wild animals; in this sense they were literally “*Umfriedungen*” (fences that grant peace). In the same way, these earthworks played a cultic role as a border between inner and outer worlds, serving to prevent supernatural, dangerous beings from penetrating into the inner world of humans. Additionally, human bones were often found in such ditches, which show that the dead were not only buried in distant, sacred places, but also in direct proximity to the settlements. Thus, as ancestors, they remained close to the living, and the ditches served likewise as holy sites.

The earthwork at Herxheim an der Weinstraße in Germany (around 5000), for example, was long misconstrued as a site of “massacre” because hundreds of skeletons were found there. Nowadays the contrary view has prevailed that this large complex served as an important supra-regional burial ground with sequentially excavated ditches arising from overlapping long pits. They never represented warlike "fortifications." [38] Before that, the Herxheim Earthworks were called on to serve as proof for the hypothesis of "human sacrifice and cannibalism." The eating of human flesh was thought to be at work here because the bones of at least 500 individuals had been disaggregated and the skulls cleaned and processed. But there is no evidence of violent, simultaneous death, and the exceptionally beautiful ceramic pots placed among the skeletons suggest burials. This time, too, the custom of secondary burial was at work—as was often the case in these early epochs.

Another example for "war and massacre" in the Neolithic is, supposedly, Schletz-Asparn in Austria (around 5000), because a number of skeletons, along with pieces of stone maceheads, were found in the ditches at this village complex. But, otherwise, these graves contained no weapons, and whether the stone maceheads represented "weapons" is questionable. They could have also served as weights for digging sticks or as flyweights for drilling in a particular handicraft; they could even have been used to crack nuts.[39] In addition, ceramics, fragments of figurines, and burnt domestic plants were found with the dead, which here also suggest burial. At this site, too—as with Herxheim—the ditches were not all dug at the same time, but at short intervals, meaning that here, too, there was no continuous "fortification." The dead were not buried together, but in quick ←27 | 28→succession and with grave goods, too. Later, the well was filled with soil and the village abandoned. This situation can hardly be interpreted as a "massacre," but more likely as the successive burial of people who probably died of a rapidly spreading sickness.[40]

The same is true for Vaihingen an der Enz in Germany (around 5000), where there is likewise no site of "war and massacre," but a settlement with a burial ground. Here, too, as is usual with Neolithic settlements, the ditches of the earthworks served for burials of relatives in the closest possible proximity to the living, which is why human remains have been found in this location, too.[41]

Also, the later Neolithic causewayed camp of Altheim in Bavaria (around 3500) fell under the “massacre” hypothesis because broken arrowheads, a chaotic assortment of bone fragments, and many pottery shards were found in the ditches of this farmstead. This led to the odd assertion that here, in a desperate attempt at defense, even pots were thrown at the attacking enemy—perhaps by the courageous farmwomen? Later this assertion was corrected, and the causewayed camp is now seen as a mass grave due to an epidemic. The kin had thrown the dead into the ditches, but they provided them with gifts of arrowheads that could no longer be used and plenty of food in the many containers.[42]

These examples show that earthworks as enclosures had a primarily religious-ritual function, not a profane warlike one, a realization that naturally vanishes when every wall and ditch is seen as a military “fortification,” and one sees “violence between villages” everywhere. Aside from these special burials, there were also actual Neolithic cemeteries, indicating that different forms of burial existed concurrently.

Such collective burials interpreted as “massacres” have also been documented from the late Neolithic Copper Age, as in the cases of the rock-cut tomb of Roaix in France and the site of San Juan Ante Portam Latinam in Spain (occupied 3800–2800). From the early Bronze Age (from 2200) there is also Sund in Norway. Despite differences of opinion among researchers, there is no “layer of war” here, since arrow wounds are limited to just a few individuals. It is more likely that these sparse fatal injuries resulted from fights between individuals and not from communally waged “war.” [43]

←28 | 29→As we can see, the number of “massacres” cited to prove constant warfare in the Neolithic becomes very sparse. For Central Europe, only two unambiguous examples remain, namely the attacks on a village near Talheim and on another near Eulau, both in Germany. In the case of Talheim near Heilbronn skeletons of 34 individuals were jumbled together haphazardly, as if thrown into the pit (around 5100). In Eulau near

Naumburg there were 13 bodies that had been slain and were given very careful burial by their kin after an attack (around 2500). In both cases there were actual massacres, in which the victims were struck down from behind, as the skull fractures indicate.[44]

What should we think of this? How do the proofs of “war” stack up? First it is important to separate the automatic linking of “massacre” and “war.” It is true that, in hierarchical state-based societies, massacres constantly occur in the setting of organized war, but in early history—as previously defined—we are not dealing with “war” at all. We are dealing with small-scale armed conflicts, which were brief and spontaneous and had no institutional military organization behind them. They arose from personal motives like revenge for injured honor, retaliation for theft, or disputes over resources. Only a few men carried out the attack; in no way did the entire clan or tribe take part. In short, these were “feuds.” Even if there were many more of these than have actually left traces, such feuds do not amount to war. If we also consider the great length of time between these two instances, the attack at Talheim around 5100 and the one at Eulau around 2500, they look more like exceptions in a vast span of time lasting millennia.

It should also be noted that these incidents belonged to two different cultures: the village near Talheim was part of the Linear-band Ceramics Culture, and the one near Eulau was part of the Corded Ware Culture. That is, these were very different social situations (as I will explain later). To conclude from the first example of Talheim that the early Neolithic Linear-band Ceramics Culture, an indigenous culture, “came to a bloody end through war” is pure nonsense. Neither would it make sense even if one or two more examples were found from this time. The Eulau attack, among the Corded Ware people, is different: these belong to the waves of Indo-European invasions into Central Europe, which robbed and destroyed indigenous cultures as they progressed. However, they were not capable of war in the sense of organized attacks, as they arrived in loose, disorganized ←29 | 30→groups, so that even here one cannot claim it was “general warfare.” The massacre of Eulau bears characteristics of a feud between similar groups.[45] So it is foolhardy to call it the “tip of an iceberg.” This “iceberg” is only arrived at through dubious extrapolations of murder rates, in the belief that such events occurred every year or decade—a completely fictitious assumption.[46] For the Neolithic, the concept of “warlike” times is therefore very problematic.[47] There is no indication to which specific region this should be applied, because there are thousands of massacre-free years in most of them. And it becomes completely invalid for the Palaeolithic Age, in which there are tens or even hundreds of millennia without attacks and massacres. It is obvious that, in these very long-lasting epochs, for the most part people lived peacefully—which is especially clear in comparison with the situation today!

In contrast to the views cited above, archaeological finds clearly show that organized warfare with frequent massacres appears only from the Iron Age onward and, in eastern cultural regions, from the late Bronze Age. In Central Europe not even in the Bronze Age were warlike attacks so remarkably pervasive. Only from the Celtic Hallstatt epoch onward (Iron Age) are serious sword wounds clearly recognizable, and wounds are very common in men due to incessant warfare as from the time of the Roman Empire and the Christian Middle Ages. Instead of decreasing, violence and war increase visibly with the growth of social hierarchy as states and empires are formed. This shows that the hypothesis of a state that allegedly pacifies the aggressive drive in humans is clearly false.[48]

The Discourse about “Peaceful Societies”

The idea of “peaceable” societies is just as imprecise as the notion of “warlike” societies, and it is just as ideologically charged. One can see directly how this involves emotions rather than knowledge by noticing how some contemporaries become downright aggressive whenever anyone speaks of earlier “peaceable” societies. What is behind this? Are they torn from their self-assurance that everything ←30 | 31→was so much worse in the past? Does it not suit their worldview to think that the development of humanity might not be a linear progression toward ever nobler, more rational and violence-free behavior? In Western civilizations, it is generally seen in this way, yet indigenous peoples and especially women tend to have the opposite view of this development, since they are not among the victors and do not write the victor's history. Looking more closely, one can readily see that human history has evolved in dramatic ruptures and the downfall of entire cultural regions, without any guarantee for the idea: "the later, then the higher and the better."

Here and elsewhere one sees the unspoken ideological tendency to set the bar for "peaceable" societies too high, with unrealistic expectations for human collective life. Ethnologist Thomas Gregor's attempt at a definition reflects this very problem. According to him, "peaceable" societies are supposed to have values and sanctions that do not allow for interpersonal or internal collective violence; all their conflicts should be resolved in a violence-free manner; they should have no special role for fighters and wage no wars—which might lead one to conclude that they should not defend themselves, but should be ready to be conquered and subdued.[49]

Other broadly held but diffuse notions have been added to this attempt at a definition, referring especially to matriarchal "peaceable" societies, such as: all their members should mother and "love" one another, hence no guidelines and social rules are necessary; likewise, no infractions of social rules should lead to even the mildest punishments; also, animals should not be eaten, but only plants, in a vegetarian way of life; and further, no tree should be cut down and no furrow plowed into the earth, so as not to cause nature pain, etc.—on the whole, an illusionary position arising from purely wishful thinking. It is based, in this case, on positive, not negative projection, which is nonetheless not an improvement. One must note in response that matriarchal societies and other "peaceable" societies are not inhabited by angels, but by human beings with their strengths and weaknesses. But how the range of their human possibilities takes shape in the world depends on the cultural values and social structures within which they live. It is these values and social patterns that constitute a peaceable or non-peaceable society.

This is why there can be spontaneous violence in matriarchal societies, between individuals caused by personal anger, and also internal collective violence due to unresolved problems. However, such societies have also developed a number of strategies for conflict resolution and peacemaking unknown in patriarchal societies, due to the fact that, in matriarchal societies, violence is proscribed and not glorified.[50] There are indeed feuds leading to homicides against members of other tribes, carried out by men for the reasons already mentioned. But these can lead to tribal alliances to end such feuds, or political marriages take place between tribes to ensure feuds do not occur in the first place.[51] In some matriarchal societies, particularly in those that have come under patriarchal pressure, there are special roles for fighters, but these serve to defend, not to conquer, seeing that not all these societies were immediately ready to submit to patriarchal invasions, but resisted.[52] Furthermore, like any society, these have social rules and establish sanctions for their infringement, but such sanctions are not connected to justice systems, prisons, and punishments involving loss of life or limb.[53]

The factors that make matriarchal societies so different are cultural values and societal structures whose basic aim is to secure peace. These are *maternal values*, derived from prototypical maternal behavior and maternal work. For example, these include nurturing and care of what is small and weak, so that it might grow; equality between the sexes and generations, not in the sense of egalitarianism, but as a complementary equality; complete reciprocity as a system of help that excludes no one; conflict resolution through negotiation, reciprocal marriage, or ritual arrangements. These values are valid for everyone, for mothers and non-mothers, for women and men alike. They create a way of living that is, in any case, more life-affirming and peaceful than what one finds in patriarchal societies.

For our work here, it is of the greatest importance to become familiar in detail with these values, customs, and structures that shape matriarchal ways of life. This knowledge has been gained from societies of this type that still exist today.[54] This is the only way we can learn to view and understand primeval and early history from a different perspective than the usual one. Without this familiarity with non-patriarchal societal forms, the result is a continued patriarchal projection onto the past due to the difficulty of seeing what differs from what one already knows. In the following chapters, this detailed knowledge of living matriarchal societies will help us understand human cultural history in a more differentiated, many-sided, and thus more appropriate way than has previously been possible.

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[1] As an ethnological example of this arbitrariness, shamans of the indigenous Naxi in southwest China have pictographs that are regarded as “writing.” The problem is that their acknowledgment as a “script culture” has been used to differentiate them from their neighbors, the Mosuo, who do not have writing, because the shaman-priests of the Mosuo intentionally reject writing down their holiest subject matter to avoid its falsification through fixation in writing. Does this make the Mosuo “ahistorical and primitive” compared with the Naxi? See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchat in Südchina*, 11–12, 103.

[2] Marija Gimbutas: *The Language of the Goddess. Unearthing the Hidden Symbols of Western Civilization*, San Francisco 1989, Harper and Row. See also Harald Haarmann: *Writing as Technology and Cultural Ecology: Explorations of the Human Mind at the Dawn of History*, Frankfurt/Main 2011, Peter Lang; first in German: *Geschichte der Schrift. Von den Hieroglyphen bis heute*, Munich 2009, Beck Verlag, 8–10, 23f. The numbers of the pages refer to the German edition.

[3] Marie E. P. Koenig: *Am Anfang der Kultur. Die Zeichensprache des frühen Menschen*, Berlin 1973, Gebr. Mann Verlag.

[4] This is a patriarchal maxim from Heraclitus, in: *Fragments*, B 53.

[5] Lawrence H. Keeley: *War before Civilization. The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*, Oxford-New York 1996, Oxford University Press. War theorists in the German language are: Harald Meller and Michael Schefzik (eds.): *Krieg. Eine archäologische Spurensuche*, Halle/Saale 2015, Exhibition catalog of the State Museum of Prehistory,

[6] Keeley, 27–29, 144–45, 151.

[7] Op. cit., Introduction, vii–x.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Op. cit., 19–20.

[10] The term BCE means “Before Common Era” and replaces the term BC (Before Christ’s birth in the year 0). The absolute age is calculated by adding 2000 years. All further years stated in the book should be understood as BCE unless specified as CE (“Common Era”).

[11] Keeley, 37–38.

[12] Op. cit., 12, 38–39, 59–60.

[13] See the Iroquois and Nayar in Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 14 and 15.

14 Keeley, Introduction, x.

15 Harry H. Turney-High: *Primitive War. Its Practice and Concepts*, Columbia, SC 1949, University of South Carolina Press.

16 See the exact distinction between “Krieg” (war) and “Fehde” (feud) in Frank Robert Vivelo: *Handbuch der Kulturanthropologie. Eine grundlegende Einführung*, Munich 1988, Klett-Cotta, DTV, 19f.

17 Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern: *Violence: Theory and Ethnography*, London-New York 2002, A&C Black, 110.

18 See Andre Gingrich: “Fremder Friede? Wie anderswo mit kriegerischer Gewalt oder deren friedlicher Beilegung umgegangen wird, nebst Randbemerkungen zu dem, was man hierzulande darüber erfährt oder auch nicht,” in: *Sein und Sinn, Burg und Mensch*, eds. Falko Daim and Thomas Kuehtreiber, St. Pölten 2001, Catalog of the Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum 434, 162f.

19 Margaret Mead: “Warfare is Only an Invention–Not a Biological Necessity,” in: *War: Studies from Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology*, eds. Leon Bramson and George W. Goethals, New York1964, Basic Books, 269–274.

20 See the discussion by Heidi Peter-Roecher: *Gewalt und Krieg im prähistorischen Europa. Beiträge zur Konfliktforschung auf der Grundlage archäologischer, anthropologischer und ethnologischer Quellen*, Reihe: Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie, Vol. 143, Bonn 2007, Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 14–24.

21 Op. cit., 11–12 and 103.

22 Siegmar von Schnurbein (ed.): *Atlas der Vorgeschichte. Europa von den ersten Menschen bis Christi Geburt*, Stuttgart 2009, Konrad Theiss Verlag. With contributions by Bernhard Haensel, Carola Metzner-Nebelsick, Rosemarie Mueller, Johannes Mueller, Thomas Terberger and Susanne Sievers.

23 Op. cit., 59–61.

24 Op. cit., 61–62.

25 See also the appalling book by a geneticist who has lost his way in cultural history: Spencer Wells: *Pandora’s Seed. Why the Hunter-Gatherers Hold the Key to Our Survival*, New York 2011, Random House Trade Paperbacks.

26 Schnurbein, 63–66.

27 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.

28 Schnurbein, 69.

29 Op. cit., 82–83, 103–105.

30 Op. cit., 153

31 Heidi Peter-Roecher’s results, summarized briefly here, are drawn from scientific-anthropological studies of exhumed human skeletons from all these epochs. These findings are registered, statistically evaluated, and carefully interpreted by her with the exactitude science requires. Her discerning work made her, together with other archaeologists, into an unambiguous opponent to the currently popular ideology of war in early history. See Heidi Peter-Roecher: *Gewalt und Krieg*, the catalog section and overall.

32 Op. cit., 45, and an interview dated August 14, 2014, University of Wuerzburg, at her Chair of Prehistoric Archaeology.

33 Op. cit., 117–118, 150, footnote 94.

34 Op cit, 121, footnote 30.

35 “Die Sage von den kopflosen Jungfrauen” (The legend of the headless virgins), newspaper article from the *Nürnberger Nachrichten* of January 16, 2015.

36 Statement by the scientist Timo Seregély, in: Peter-Roecher: *Gewalt und Krieg*, 121, footnote 50.

37 Peter-Roecher, 52 and footnote 41.

38 Op. cit., 144; see the same also for the earthwork of Rosheim (Bas-Rhin) and the Middle Bronze Age Velim: Ibid, footnote 74.

39 Eric Biermann: “Krieg in der Vorgeschichte,” in: *Mitteleuropa im 5. Jahrtausend vor Christus*, eds. Ralf Gleser and Valeska Becker, Berlin 2012, LIT Verlag, 331.

40 Heidi Peter-Roecher, 144.

41 Op. cit., 150.

42 Op. cit., 105–106.

43 Op. cit., 150–151.

44 For Talheim, see J. Wahl and H. G. Koenig: “Anthropologisch-traumatologische Untersuchung der menschlichen Skelettreste aus dem bandkeramischen Massengrab bei Talheim, Kreis Heilbronn,” *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 12, Stuttgart 1987, Konrad Theiss Verlag. For Eulau, see A. Muhl, H. Meller, K. Heckenhahn: *Tatort Eulau. Ein 4500 Jahre altes Verbrechen wird aufgeklärt*, Stuttgart 2010, Konrad Theiss Verlag.

45 Muhl, Meller, Heckenhahn, Ibid.

46 Peter-Roecher, 185–186.

47 The fact that the Corded Ware People are still counted as part of the “Neolithic Age” is due to their primitive stone weapons, which they used up to a very late time; while elsewhere bronze had already been used for a long period (Bronze Age). Hence the problem of naming cultural epochs after tools or weapons which, firstly, differ widely in time from one cultural region to another and, secondly, have no significance in terms of the social order, which is much more important.

48 Peter-Roecher, 187–190.

49 Thomas Gregor: “Uneasy Peace: Intertribal Relations in Brazil’s Upper Xingu,” in: *The Anthropology of War*, ed. Jonathan Haas, New York 1990, Cambridge University Press, 106.

50 For an example of internal collective violence followed by ritual resolution of the conflict among the Hopi, see Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 13.

51 For this, see the Iroquois founding their league from five tribes, and also the history of the Akan peoples in: Op. cit., Chapters 14 and 17.

52 See, for example, the Iroquois with their defensive battles against the invasion of the white man: Op. cit., Chapter 14.

53 See, for example, the Hopi with their sanctions against a traitorous chief: Op. cit., Chapter 13.

54 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.

←33 | 34→

2

Palaeolithic in West Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe: The Development of Mother-Centered Societies

Chronology of the Palaeolithic Era

5–4 Mya:	“Hominidae” or near-human upright bipeds
3.2 Mya:	“Lucy”
2.7 Mya – 300,000:	Lower Palaeolithic, “Homo habilis,” “Homo erectus,” and others
300,000 – 38,000:	Middle Palaeolithic, “Homo sapiens neanderthalensis”
200,000 – 10,000:	Upper Palaeolithic, “Homo sapiens sapiens”

(Overlapping times reflect the synchronicity of human types and cultural phenomena.)

Origins from Africa and the Adventures of Peopling the World

Humanity originated in Africa, as did the first near-human upright bipeds that evolved approximately 5–4 million years ago. Petrified footprints of two adults and a child, indicating upright posture, were found in East

Africa (northern Tanzania). Skull fragments of various hominid types were found along the East African Rift Valley as far as Kenya, and also in South African caves (approx. ←35 | 36→4–3 million years old), before finally the complete, fragile skeleton of the female “Lucy” (approx. 3.2 million years old) was discovered in Ethiopia. All of these hominids were closely related.[1]

The oldest fossils of the first male and female humans (2.7 million years old) came from the same regions, especially the Olduvai Gorge, a part of the East African Rift Valley.[2] There they once occupied the banks of a lake, before everything was buried under thick sediment for millennia, until finally a river washed away the sedimentation, exposing the fossils. Similar remains were found at other locations in East and South Africa.[3]

The first women and men of this “Oldowan” era used purposefully crafted stone tools such as handaxes and wedges (from 2.7 Mya) and built shelters and camps, proof of their ability to make plans. More recent finds show that, at this early time, they had already spread throughout Africa, avoiding hot deserts and jungles, and preferring open savannas with occasional trees. As frequent finds in today’s Sahara Desert show, that during those long time periods the desert was also open grassland. Gradually the stone tools of the first humans took on more differentiated forms. Wood was used to make digging sticks and clubs, and evidence of plant gathering and fire use dates from this time (Kalambo Falls archaeological site).[4] In the absence of hunting at this early time, gathering was the basis for life, and a variety of wood and stone implements were invented for this purpose. All these advances reflect capabilities not characteristic of great apes or near-humans; they represent the beginnings of “culture.”

During this epoch the Lower Palaeolithic Era began, and until about 1.8 million years ago there was no human habitation on other continents. From this point on the first humans started to migrate out of Africa. Beginning around two million years ago, an ice age fixed large amounts of water in expanding ice sheets, lowering the water’s surface far below its level in warmer epochs. As a result, large areas that are now submerged as flat shelf seas were fertile lowlands. Land bridges connected Africa and Europe. Since the Strait of Gibraltar did not exist or was very narrow, North Africa and Spain were linked. Asia Minor and Greece were also connected by land bridges. From Northeast Africa, the first women and ←36 | 37→men reached western Asia, where their handaxes have been found in Palestine/Israel (1.5 Mya) and their fossils discovered in Georgia (Dmanissi, 1.8 Mya). They remained for long periods in these warm zones, as later finds in Palestine/Israel and Syria indicate, and also in eastern Anatolia and on the upper Euphrates.[5] Crossing Asia Minor and Greece, they then entered southeastern Europe, where they remained in the warm zone around the Mediterranean Sea.

Their paths also led them from Northwest Africa to Europe. They crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, for early finds were located in South Spain (Orce, 1.3 Mya) and in North Spain (Atapuerca, 1.2 Mya).[6] Europe north of the Alps did not attract these first men and women due to the ice and freezing temperatures. In general, Europe was not their goal, since it was surrounded by oceans and turned out to be a “dead end” for further migrations. From West Asia, on the other hand, they could spread out unhindered toward the east into enormous areas of warm land, and as a result, their remains have been discovered in East Asia (Yuanmou, West China, 1.7 Mya) and also South Asia (Sangiran, Java, 1.3 Mya).[7]

But over the long period of the Lower Paleolithic, the climatic situation repeatedly changed. A warmer phase brought the first women and men into the former cold zones of North China and Europe north of the Alps. When the colder temperatures returned, they did not retreat, but made significant adjustments to environments that became tundra with scanty subarctic forest. They now lived in these areas as well: in Beijing (Zhoukoudian, 450,000–350,000) and in France, South England, Belgium, and West Germany (700,000–300,000).[8]

These first women and men in Europe and West Asia evolved into the Neanderthal people of the Middle Palaeolithic (300,000–38,000). They did not come from Africa anymore. They occupied western Eurasia all the way to the edge of the mighty northern glaciers, which advanced, retreated, and advanced again in several ice-age phases with warmer intervals between. Neanderthal men and women adapted very well to these conditions; their robust physiques made them resilient, and they lived in caves, under rock overhangs (“abris”) and in numerous locations on open land. Their distribution extended from Spain across all of South and Central Europe to the Caucasus, to the Zāgros Mountains, and in the south to Palestine/Israel. In Africa and East Asia no presence of Neanderthal humans has been found.[9]

←37 | 38→Africa subsequently became the cradle of anatomically modern humans (Cro-Magnon people).[10] They originated there as early as the Middle Palaeolithic (from 200,000), and were completely like today’s humans in their physical traits. Their earliest skeletal remains and tools came from South Africa (Florisbad, 250,000–200,000; Klasies River Mouth, 150,000; Blombos Cave, 100,000) and Ethiopia (Herto, 160,000).[11] These women and men invented wood-handled tools, stored supplies of dried meat, and created the earliest art with African rock paintings. They then spread throughout Africa, also to previously uninhabited zones such as tropical jungles. Soon individual groups of these modern humans migrated into Arabia and West Asia, where their remains have been found (Qafzeh Cave, 115,000).[12] They inhabited these warm regions for a long time, and some ventured as far as the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Crete, an indication that humans crossed the sea from very early on.[13] The beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic period is considered to coincide with their late entry into an inhospitable Central Europe around 40,000.

At a much earlier time, modern humans migrated by land to central, southern, and eastern Asia. Various sites containing their remains in China and Southeast Asia date their arrival at around 70,000. Because water levels had dropped by approximately 170 m during the Ice Ages, they were able to reach what are today the large Indonesian islands of Borneo, the Philippines, and Java, since these were connected with the Asian mainland (Sundaland) by wide shelf lowlands.[14]

During this epoch, modern humans also entered previously uninhabited lands and continents: Japan, also accessed by land, and Australia. Together with New Guinea and Tasmania, Australia formed a large independent landmass (Sahulland) as it was separated by sea from the East Asian landmass. Findings of modern early humans in Australia have led archaeologists to estimate that this continent was already settled around 50,000,[15] indicating that these men and ←38 | 39→women must have been so early able to cross such a long distance by water using rafts or dugout boats, an extraordinary pioneering achievement.[16]

The earliest modern human settlements in the two Americas date from around 40,000–34,000 years ago, with the oldest finds in South America (Monte Verde, Chile, around 33,000; Pedra Furada, Brazil, around 32,000; Pikimachay and Guitarrero Caves, Peru), with additional sites in Argentina and Colombia around 22,000. This is of interest because the earliest finds from northwestern North America date only from around 16,000 or even later.[17] This is a puzzle for archaeologists, since it calls into question the prevalent theory that modern humans first crossed to the Americas over the Bering land bridge between Siberia and Alaska, which at that time was wide and dry. Moreover, a giant ice sheet covered this northernmost part of the continent, while South America provided warm, fertile land.

To solve this puzzle, it is necessary to hypothesize that there were two migration routes: one much later across the Bering land bridge, and another earlier one by sea across the Pacific. This may seem improbable, but we must consider that, at this time, due to lower sea levels, the wide waters of the Pacific were interspersed with islands, and these were not just tiny dots in the sea, but had larger land surfaces. They extended in a line from New Guinea through the former Solomon Land to the lands of Vanuatu and Fiji. From there they continued along island chains that had emerged from the waters to the land around the Easter Island, and on to South America. Still today the broad insular shelves around these island groups bear witness to their once great expanse.

Palaeolithic Economy: More than just Hunting

What was the diet of the human-like female “Lucy,” who lived in Africa long before the Palaeolithic Era? She ate grass and leaves and other plants, which was the usual diet of hominids.[18]

Plant food was and remained the nutritional basis for humans during the Lower Paleolithic in Africa, this continent so rich in vegetation. The ice plates ←39 | 40→that covered northern Europe displaced the temperate climate zone far southward, so that today’s deserts and semi-deserts once had plenty of rain. The plant-based diet consisted of leaves, stalks and sprouts, roots and bulbs, fruits, berries, wild vegetables, seeds and nuts, so it had great variety. In addition, small animals such as insects, frogs, lizards, and turtles could be collected along with birds’ eggs and honey, all gathered by the women and men alike of these early human groups. They mainly used wooden tools such as digging sticks and clubs, as evidenced by the site of Kalambo Falls; there the first stone tools have also been found (Ethiopia, 2.5 Mya). These were sharp-edged flakes and used to work wood and cut food, but not for hunting, since with such nutritional variety, at that time humans ate enough protein-rich food.[19] Hunting for large animals was not necessary, and such practices did not yet exist. The economy of this era was a pure *gathering economy*.

Women probably gathered more intensively than men, because they had to feed their children and themselves. They made slings and straps from plant fibers to carry the smallest children and nets and baskets to transport what they gathered. This gathering equipment was developed by women, and indigenous women today still use infant slings and baskets with head straps. Women used small branches to weave mats and wind screens, which were also used as roofing for simple shelters, the first dwellings, to protect little children from the rain and heat. Shelters like these, invented around 1.8 million years ago, were found in the Olduvai Gorge.[20] In this way, women as mothers were the driving force in early human evolution, due to their responsibility for the survival of the species.[21]

It was probably by chance that humans began to eat meat, as they found remains left by predators and feasted on the carrion. But this could hardly have been their daily diet, not even in the lucky case of an elephant getting mired in the mud and died. They had butchered it with heavy chopping tools and sharp knife-like flakes of stone (Olduvai Gorge, 1.6 Mya), a task which would not take too long for a larger group of men and women.[22] Both men and women had access to stone tools, since both produced the tools they used. Therefore, it was women who produced the small stone knives and scrapers for preparing food, cutting ←40 | 41→meat and processing hides and bones. The notion that women only worked with soft materials like wood, and men with hard materials like stone, has proven to be an obsolete stereotype.[23]

Carrion consumption obviously made humans crave for more, though this food was neither healthy nor easily accessible. If a predator defended the remains of its prey, it could become dangerous. Humans themselves could easily become the prey, not only of predators, but also of their new obsession. The solution was to defend themselves with sticks; and, even better, they began to hurl the sticks at the animals from a distance. This was the origin of throwing sticks and spears.[24] Thus the hunted became the hunters, imitating predators to obtain fresh meat from the same prey. This was the beginning of hunting in Africa, West Asia, Europe, and everywhere humans of the Lower Palaeolithic moved.

The importance of hunting has been and still is mightily overestimated in conservative archaeology. The image of “Man the Hunter,” originator of the first economy and culture, still reappears habitually the literature; surrounded by a mystique of adventure and heroism, he is the predecessor of the “Big Man.” In this view, stone tools are attributed only to men and are explored and described in detail: entire epochs and regions are categorized on this basis—as if they were the only cultural goods. The tools are declared outright to be “weapons,” though it is hunting gear we are dealing with. But hunting was not always heroic: hunters used beaters and fire to flush out animals, and they drove elephants into swamps (Torralba-Ambrona, Spain) or drove buffalo and rhinos over cliffs (Channel Islands, England, 700,000–400,000).[25] Pit traps and ambushes were other preferred methods.

Much time passed before hunting tools were sufficiently improved to allow for targeted killing. Neanderthal hunters in the Middle Palaeolithic used a series of specialized stone tools, including perfect wooden spears (Schoeningen, 300,000). With these they dared, in groups, to hunt big game like European bison, wooly rhinos, reindeer and the mighty mammoth.[26] The hunt became even more effective with modern humans in the Upper Palaeolithic, since they improved their spears and invented spear throwers as well as bows and arrows (13,000–12,000). By the end of the Upper Paleolithic, however, this had led to the near extinction ←41 | 42→of large animals such as the mammoth, wooly rhino, and bison. As a result, humans had to turn to fishing, for which they used harpoons and nets.[27]

One might think that all this would make men as hunters increasingly important, especially in ice-age northern Europe, but also in the glaciated mountains of Anatolia and the Zāgros Mountains (northern Iraq and northwestern Iran). Here, too, Neanderthal people lived, mostly in caves, and later also modern humans.[28] They were all exposed to considerable climatic fluctuations during various ice ages and interglacial periods. Now it seems that, due to the cold, there was no other food source besides big game, which immediately leads to the claim that “Man the Hunter” provided all the food.

This is false in many respects since, first, successful hunts in all epochs of the Palaeolithic depended on chance and could never be taken for granted. When a mammoth, a bison, or a reindeer was taken, it was a luxury and led to a feast, but did not make up the daily food. Second, in spite of the ice ages, there were plenty of plants in summer, since these quite southerly latitudes of Europe and West Asia, unlike the Arctic regions, did not lack sunlight. The fair season was a time for busy gathering, and it has been estimated that gathered food provided a much larger proportion of the total diet than hunting, possibly reaching 60–70%. Women gathered both for themselves and their children, and they shared the food with men, so they were the ones who secured the basic diet. Moreover, plant food in the daily diet provides the variety of nutrients the body requires for health.[29] In all the different climate zones and world regions, women gatherers possessed a rich, well-developed knowledge of the plant world that was part of their culture—as is still evident in gatherer societies today.[30]

Third, women developed the important arts of plant preservation by drying, smoking, roasting, and freezing, as well as the storage of food supplies for the winter so there would always be plenty of plant food in the diet.[31] During extremely cold phases when nothing grew, people generally retreated towards the south, since at that time there was still space to do so. Here they could find enough vegetation for their needs.

←42 | 43→Fourth, the idea that everything of note in the Palaeolithic Era derives solely from men's hunting is male wishful thinking. By now it has been proved that women also hunted when they wished to. Physically, they were as large and strong as men—as can be seen in indigenous societies of today.[32] Even their children did not hinder them; they tied infants to their backs and carried them along. Small children, on the other hand, stayed with other group members in the camp. A number of present-day indigenous communities have long traditions of women hunting together. In the Palaeolithic era, too, women hunted small game such as Arctic hares, snow grouse, wild geese, ducks, and pheasants, which they caught in snares and traps. They also knew how to throw spears and became skilled with the bow and arrow, and they participated in big-game drive hunts.[33] It is not by chance that European mythology still depicts hunting goddesses such as Artemis and Diana. With these skills, women were self-sufficient and practically independent of the men, as one could see in the example of the indigenous women of the North American prairie. The woman bound to the home by her children and dependent on a male "provider" is a projection into the past of today's late bourgeois nuclear family.

To call such an economy "hunter and gatherer" is simply inaccurate. The term "male hunters and women gatherers" fits better, since it indicates the main focus of gendered activity. However, this also presumes fixed roles that surely did not yet exist in this form. This is why we avoid such fixation, and call the economy developed in the Palaeolithic Age an *economy of gathering and hunting.*

Looking at this economy without the usual one-sidedness, it is easy to see that men probably depended more on the skills of woman than vice versa. One of women’s skills that were essential for survival was tending the fire in the caves and in the tents and huts of open-air camps. It is no longer possible to know who, more than one million years ago, first tamed the flames caused by lightning strikes or prairie fires. But probably it was women who gathered small embers in vessels and blew on them to rekindle the fire at the camp.[34] In the huts, everyone needed warmth for survival during the ice ages, especially the small children, who were so important for the survival of the species. Palaeolithic places with hearths have been documented everywhere.[35] All indigenous societies know women as keepers of the fire, whether they occupy cold northern zones or hot zones in the south.[36] Among Mongolian and Tibetan peoples, a fire goddess is honored at the hearth, which is a holy place.[37] In European antiquity there was also a goddess of the holy hearth fire called Hestia.

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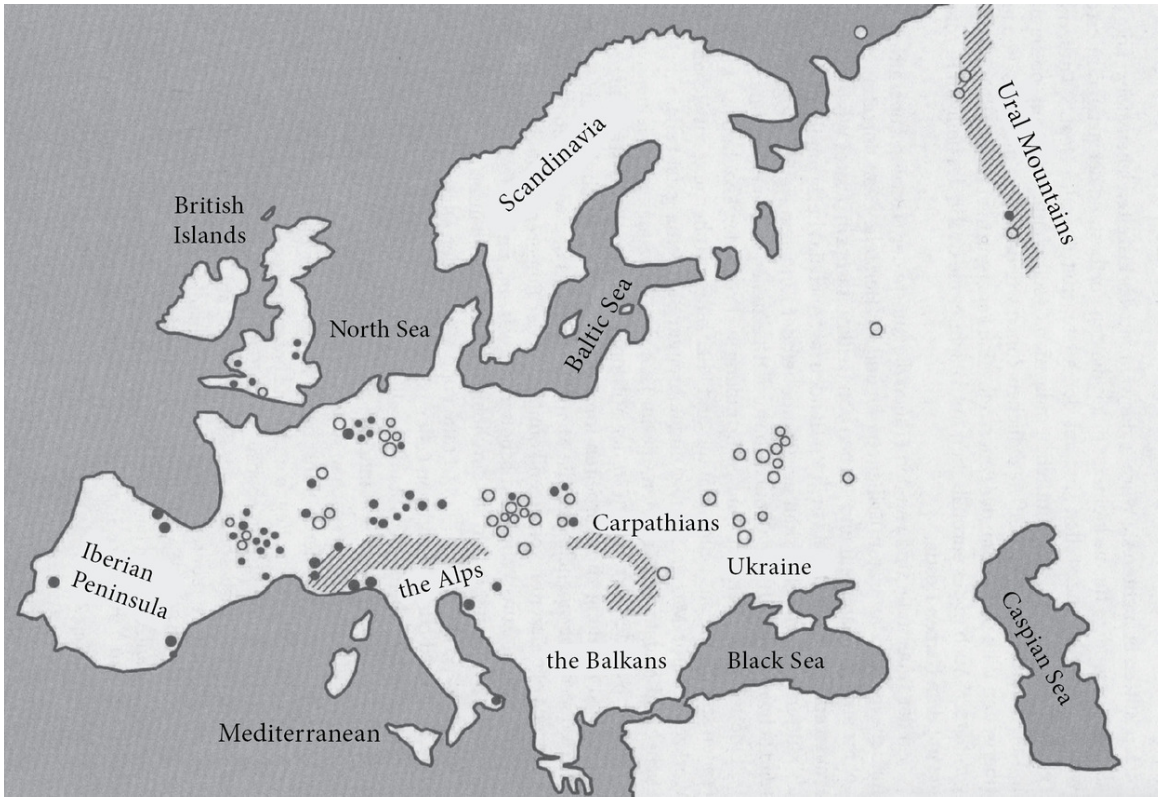
Around the hearth, women developed the skills of food preparation: frying, grilling, boiling, and food preservation, as well as the preparation of herbs they’d picked for medical purposes, based on ancestral knowledge acquired and preserved by women. All this related to women’s responsibilities as mothers, maintaining the health of their children as well as their own during pregnancy and birth. In this way they became the first healers.

Clothing was another essential innovation for life in the ice ages. Women produced garments from furs, skins, and plant fiber, and they made the necessary tools: knives, scrapers, and gimlets for working with the furs; bone piercers and needles for sewing that became increasingly fine with time. In the Middle Palaeolithic, Neanderthal women already knew how to cure furs and turn them into clothing (ca. 100,000).[38] These innovations first made it possible for humans to venture from warmer regions into ice age Europe. Beginning with the Upper Palaeolithic, clothing became more beautiful and more artfully done; it was decorated with colored fibers and sometimes richly ornamented with pearls made from pierced snail shells.[39] It is a crude falsification, then, to depict Palaeolithic women and men as unkempt savages, half naked or draped in matted animal skins. They were no “primitives,” but just as gifted and intelligent as we are. However, they stood at the beginning of human history, and first had to make those most basic discoveries we now take for granted.

Another crucial skill of women was how to construct shelters as protection from the heat, cold, rain, and wind. In the ice-age zones of Europe as far as Russia and in the mountains of West Asia, the survival of humans, especially children, depended on this. The remains of simple huts have been found in Europe as far ←44 | 45→back as the Lower Palaeolithic (Coast of Terra Amata, South France, 400,000).[40] Neanderthals also did not only live in caves, but built camps in open land in regions lacking mountains and caves. In the Upper Palaeolithic, shelter construction increased considerably (Map 1). Traces have been found of yurt-like round lodges and tents, and of unique structures along the Dnieper River in Ukraine and southern Russia. Here, lacking wood, round lodges were built from mammoth bones and skulls, and this stable frame was covered with animal skins.[41] Tents and lodges with wooden frames were also covered with processed animal skins, and producing these was generally women’s work. In hot regions, from the earliest times, women also produced woven matting for wind screens and airy roofing.


British Islands
North Sea
Scandinavia
Baltic Sea
Ural Mountains
Iberian Peninsula
the Alps
Carpathians
Ukraine
the Balkans
Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Mediterranean

Map 1: Places of the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe (black dots: caves and abris, white dots: camps in open land)

Since women built these shelters, they were also women’s property. We know of Mongolian peoples today where the yurts belong to the women. They transport them with pack animals from one place and erect them in another. The same is true of the nomadic Tuareg tents in the Sahara, which are the property of the women who weave them from goat hair. The construction and decoration of permanent clay dwellings among indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas is solely women’s work. Women developed these skills, and the houses are theirs. The house itself is considered female and is decorated with attributes such as breasts and a vulva symbol at the entrance.[42] Even linguistically, “woman” and “house” are identical, as examples from Africa show: the word “axxam” in the language of the Berbers means both “woman” and “house,”[43] and the name of the Egyptian goddess Hathor means “house of Horus.” Such examples are so numerous that we can assume it was no different in the earliest epochs.

From all this we see the great economic importance of women in Palaeolithic times, which has been completely obscured by the fantasy image of “Man the Great Hunter.”

←45 | 46→One more economic activity remains to be considered that supposedly elevated men’s role: so-called “trade.” It is believed that the wide-ranging finds of raw materials and exotic objects in areas where they are not naturally found ←46 | 47→indicate the existence of trade.[44] For example, in the large, long-occupied camps of Goennersdorf and Andernach-Martinsberg in Germany (ca. 13,500) archaeologists have found flint from the Baltic Sea, Meuse flint from the region around Aachen, chalcedony from Bonn, opal from the south, and further, fossils used as ornaments: shells and a shark tooth from the Adriatic and snail shells from the Mediterranean and Atlantic. All these objects were carried long distances of 300–1,000 km.[45] This leads to the conclusion that wide communication networks existed—a persuasive hypothesis, since migrating groups in the Palaeolithic encountered others and shared experiences. But now a secondary hypothesis has appeared of central camps that functioned as transfer sites, where “trade” was in the hands of men who supposedly “controlled” it. This notion is applied already to the Palaeolithic, and then projected forward into the Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages, allowing a certain “power” to accrue to men.[46]

This hypothesis has had its detractors and there has been clear criticism. Palaeolithic humans were always on the move; they were not confined to “transfer sites” to watch over their goods, but moved, sometimes seasonally, sometimes for new hunting and gathering sites. In the process, they took along all kinds of objects, including special stones and other items they found by chance, which explains how these objects came to be distributed across wide areas. However, these people did not travel long distances to find these objects for subsequent trading activities. In the Upper Palaeolithic the distances traveled grew longer, an indication that the number of mobile groups increased and their communication networks became wider. Interesting objects were passed along from one group to the next, meaning that objects, not persons, traveled long distances. At any centrally located camp many such objects came together without the existence of “systematic trade.”[47]

In any case, “trade” is not an adequate description of this process, since it presumes the purposeful acquisition of desired goods, and also a group of traders who travel long distances for this specific purpose. Last but not least, it requires money as the motor of trade. There can be no question of all this in the Palaeolithic Age. People often speak of non-cash “bartering,” but this is no improvement. It, too, presumes that this was a primitive kind of trade with a corresponding trader mentality. But the actual situation could have been quite different. It is significant ←47 | 48→that all the goods traveling long distances were luxury goods not needed for daily life. Palaeolithic groups acquired such necessary goods independently from each other, from their specific environment. In a situation like this, no one can gain “power” over others by centralizing vitally necessary goods.

As a consequence, the concept of “bartering” also misses the point, since most probably this was reciprocal gift-giving during regular or chance encounters. Interesting ethnological parallels exist, such as the famous “Kula Ring” of the Trobriand Islanders in Melanesia. With their ocean-going canoes, Trobriand groups undertook dangerous journeys to distant islands in the western Pacific. On their journeys they carried coral necklaces and mussel-shell bracelets, luxury goods offered as gifts upon arrival, for “Kula” means “gift.” Recipients wore these gifts with pride, but when they, in turn, undertook the next expedition into the vastness of the Pacific to another island group, these goods were again offered as gifts. In this way gifts traveled from one island group to the next, all within a range of 3,000 km. This is the “Kula Ring.” Gifts were meant to show travelers’ peaceful intentions and to reinforce friendly connections among the peoples of these different island groups, thus avoiding conflict and combat.[48]

We are dealing, then, with a very effective peace-keeping method that functioned exceedingly well. Similar motives can be presumed for people of the Palaeolithic Era who likewise, when encountering others, could avoid conflict and communicate amicably through gifts as tokens of peace. Seen from this perspective, they did indeed have wide-ranging communication networks, within which the rare objects used as gifts were by-products. In this system there is as little room for “conflict and war” at every encounter—as was once hypothesized[49]—as for men who “controlled” these networks as an “exercise of power.” Such notions only reflect ingrained habits of thinking in terms of aggression and dominance, as is typical for our times, but not for the men and women of the Palaeolithic Era.

In summary, concerning the Palaeolithic economy, we can say that neither the men’s often dangerous hunting activities nor the women’s extremely varied subsistence economy led to any social predominance of one over the other. Additionally, the activities of men and women overlapped when necessary, so that they did not lead to rigid gender roles. Types of work were not ranked “higher” or “lower” because hierarchical principles were completely alien to these people. Certainly, individual women and men sometimes stepped forward as leaders, but no social institution existed to indicate dominance. Ethnological research ←48 | 49→found quite similar conditions among one of the population groups with the most ancient roots, the KhoiSan of southern Africa, insofar as they still adhered to their ancient economy of gathering and hunting in the Kalahari Desert.[50]

Palaeolithic Social Order: More than just the Horde

In discussions of the Palaeolithic social order, one must also overcome many clichés and prejudices that turn out to be mere projections based on our much later cultural conditions. As our observations on the Palaeolithic economy have shown, during these extremely long cultural epochs humans had a fundamentally egalitarian way of life. Based on archaeological findings, neither a predominant gender nor the dominance of individuals can be assumed. On the contrary, men and women necessarily worked closely together in order to survive in small groups of a few dozen people under ice-age conditions.[51]

The clearest evidence of gender equality comes from Palaeolithic burial sites (such as La Ferrassie in France, and Es-Skhul on Mount Carmel in Palestine/Israel). Men and women had similar ornamentation, with seashells, snail shells, and animal teeth; the men had only slightly more than the women. But in skull burials it was the reverse: the skulls of women were ornamented with strings of snail shells, and those of men were not. However, these finds were so rare that it is difficult to draw conclusions. Children’s graves were decorated with special loving care, which suggests that a child’s death was especially painful.[52]

There was, however, a center for social life. It was the warming, protective, sacred hearth tended by women in the shelters. Group members came together there; women provided them with food, clothing, and medicines, and women protected the small children there, thus becoming, themselves, the center of social life. But the egalitarian living conditions prevailing in the shelters indicate that “center” does not mean “top of a hierarchy”—as it is usually misinterpreted. There is one Palaeolithic example of several tent sites with the inside of the tents divided into completely equal female and male halves. Men’s implements were found on one side, and on the other, the women’s implements, including female figurines.[53] When women and men came together, then, they sat in their separate sections, and this is thought to apply also to Palaeolithic camps in other areas. Such a seating arrangement corresponds to today’s customs in Mongolian yurts and Tuareg tents; it has been handed down in the great clan houses of present-day matriarchal farming societies such as the Mosuo in southwestern China.[54]

Despite such evidence of equality, there has been wild speculation about the Palaeolithic social order, primarily due to the fiction of “Man the Hunter,” who supposedly invented and achieved everything. As a result, it is mindlessly repeated that humans lived in “nuclear families,” with the implication that the hunter-man played the “father” role and provided for his home-bound wife and children, since she herself was not able to do so. The only proof given is the size of the shelters, which supposedly would accommodate a nuclear family.[55]

This is nothing but late-bourgeois wishful thinking, which looks everywhere and at all times for the “Holy Family” of father, mother, and child. It obscures the fact that the shelter sizes were well suited to women with their children—which they bore at 4 or 5-year intervals—as the primary and elemental social unit, independent of whether men were present. Males as older sons or lovers may have lived in the women’s huts, but they were helpers or guests rather than owners. Women shared the gathered food with their children and these guests, who brought their share of the hunt. The sharing of food and shelter developed organically out of the mother-child relationship, which was transferred as a prototypical maternal attitude to the entire community.[56]

Current fatherhood ideology, however, presumes that women in Palaeolithic groups were sexually active with only one man—something that is highly unlikely, given women’s great importance and freedom. Yet being the only man is a prerequisite for recognizing biological fatherhood, meaning that men would have had to shut women in for their entire lives to prevent them from meeting any other lovers. But this artificial and very violent construct first arose in early patriarchal societies, where women were subjugated and made into objects for male desires. It originated with rulers who wanted to identify their real sons as heirs to their looted treasures and territorial conquests stolen from the vanquished people—a very late development, in historical terms. In the long cultural periods prior to this there was no restriction on women’s freedom of movement, and thus no “fatherhood” or “paternal line” was recognized. Both the idea and the term of fatherhood were unknown. Motherhood, on the other hand, was always known, because it derived from the fact of birth, and so children were always seen as *her* children. Given the open, often changing sexual relationships between women and men, it is not even clear that they knew the connection between conception and birth. They probably believed that women brought forth life from themselves—just like Mother Earth. In particular, the view was that children came from ancestors and not from man; that is, the perspective was completely different.

One of the first ethnologists among Trobriand Islanders still observed the belief that children did not originate from man, but from ancestor spirits returning to life through a young woman from the same clan. The facts of procreation were unknown to them. The same idea has been reported by the first explorer of the Mosuo, in which the children, when asked about their father, named their mother's brother, as they were unfamiliar with the term of "father" and the concept of biological paternity.[57] The worldwide rituals of retrieving ancestral souls from ponds, stones, and tombs practiced by women demonstrate the same view: children come from ancestors, not from biological "fathers," and are reborn into life by women.[58]

Another popular area that is attempting to solve the riddle of the earliest social order is sociobiology, that is, the comparison of higher animals with early human groups. This opened the door to speculation, since the choice of relevant groups of animals was completely arbitrary. At first, stags with multiple hinds and stallions with their herds of mares were the examples used to project authoritarian men's polygamous harem fantasies as "natural" onto early humans. This approach worked until it was discovered that it was the females, not the males that led the herds. Then the apes had their turn: first baboons and gorillas, where males with their group of females were built up into pashas, which became models of "innate" male behavior. Gibbons, because they lived in pairs, also served as proof that monogamous, faithful marriage formed the basis of human behavior. With regard to chimpanzees, views contrasted greatly and found few points of agreement, but nonetheless they have been used for similar pronouncements. Most recently, those women who criticize patriarchal projections onto the animal world have called attention to the

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bonobos, or pygmy chimpanzees; grouped around leading females, these now supposedly prove matriarchal patterns.

Overlooked in all this is the fact that human social patterns develop incrementally as conscious constructions and are not purely instinctual. As a result, human societies and animal populations cannot be compared. Sociobiological arguments like these are in principle not useful: they explain nothing. This is due, on the one hand, to the extraordinary variation of animal behavior, and on the other, to the multiplicity of interpretations arising from individual arbitrariness and the ideology of the day.

Instead of resorting to unsuitable comparisons with the animal world, it makes more sense to look at ethnological studies of population groups with gathering and hunting economies to understand Palaeolithic humans. But here, too, subjectivity and patriarchal ideology dominate, as we can see in the choice of subjects. Australian Aborigines were long seen as good examples due to their supposed “primitivism,” whereby—seen through the western lens—they were interpreted to be extremely patriarchal and thus misinterpreted. This is nothing more than circular argumentation, since the desired outcome is assumed from the outset. Other examples of aboriginal people, such as the Papua of New Guinea and the Eskimo or “Inuit” of the Arctic Circle, supposedly proved that these groups had established monogamous, male-dominated marriage because the economic activities of both sexes were so necessarily complementary. This interpretation, with its rigid roles, has also been projected onto Palaeolithic society.[59] This meant ignoring that individualistic economies did not exist either in the Palaeolithic period or in more recent indigenous gathering and hunting societies; instead, there were communal economies, meaning that there is no point in assuming paired marriage or universal male dominance.[60] Insofar as some gathering and hunting societies show these patterns today, it is because colonialist intervention forced them into a sedentary lifestyle and exposed them to Christian missionaries.[61] The Yanomami of Brazil, with men who are very aggressive and considered “warlike,” are the new favorite

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example of a gathering and hunting society with women in a subordinate status. This society allegedly proves that male dominance and “war” have existed since the dawn of time—a line of argument every bit as feeble as those preceding it.[62]

To stem this rampant subjectivity in the choice of ethnic groups, it is necessary to limit the indigenous populations to those that can serve as relevant examples. Both Australian Aborigines and Brazilian Yanomami live far from their African point of origin and have endured long and difficult journeys. This ethno-historically important consideration is usually not considered. The limitation, then, must relate to Africa, where humans originated and where the most ancient peoples are found. These would be most likely to reflect the patterns of their Palaeolithic forebears. Such aboriginal people would be the above-mentioned San in southern Africa, that is, those groups who were pushed into the Kalahari semi-desert and have still retained their Khoe language and their traditional way of life as foragers.[63] The same goes for the Pygmies, the little people who fled into the central African jungle, which protects them. Pygmies and San have the same blood type and their skin is light yellow to slightly light brown; both are aboriginal people who differ anatomically from black Africans.[64] Long ago these groups occupied broad swaths of eastern Africa (Pygmies) and all of southern Africa (San), exactly the regions where the remains of the first modern humans were found.

The Khoe language is extremely old, containing clicks that no longer exist in any other language. The San’s traditional way of life is just as old, with its modest gathering and hunting economy, which was probably more bountiful before they ←53 | 54→had to retreat into the semi-desert. They, then, like the Pygmies, are most likely to solve the riddle of social order in Palaeolithic times:

The San in the Kalahari live in groups of a few dozen individuals.[65] They wear aprons of tanned leather and decorative beads made from the ostrich-egg shells. Body painting and patterned tattoos are also common, and they love music, dance, and song. The groups have no chiefs, although the oldest men and women often lead, due to their experience. Individual groups within a tribe are completely equal, meaning it is an *egalitarian society*. Individuals move easily back and forth between groups that have porous boundaries, and especially when a woman chooses a man, he will usually join her group and help out there. The women build semicircular huts framed with branches and covered with grass, where a woman can invite a man.[66] Women's autonomy is safeguarded by social values, such as the strict code of sharing whenever a hunter brings the coveted but infrequent prey of meat. Furthermore, all boasting and violence between people and all competitive behavior among men are rejected. Likewise, open displays of anger or attempts to gain higher status and material belongings are frowned upon. In small groups lacking privacy, such behaviors are noticed immediately and, in irremediable cases, can lead to banishment from the group.[67]

Among the Pygmies, too, with their scanty clothing of bark fabric, membership to individual groups is fluid. Whoever happens to be present, helping to gather and hunt, belongs to the group. The group is "family," but this has nothing to do with blood ties. Due to this constant open changing, there is neither a dominant age group nor a "Big Man," so this society, too, is egalitarian.[68]

The openness of these groups does not allow for real genealogies: neither among the San nor the Pygmies. The women recognize their birth children in a rudimentary maternal line, but this extends only to the next generation, not beyond. In addition, there are the so-called "grandmothers," elderly women who help the younger women with children and ensure their survival.[69] The question ←54 | 55→here is whether this signifies real kinship or is just an age-based designation. Within each age class, members call each other "sister" and "brother," referring not to blood kinship, but to the fact that they are of a similar age. Similarly, all women with children are collectively "mothers," and the group of elderly women helping the mothers is collectively called "grandmothers"—or so called by researchers, because we are so much accustomed to this concept. When we hear this terminology, we immediately assign blood lineages, but the open nature of these societies does not allow any established genealogy. For them, the age group they belong to is “kinship.”

As for men, “father” is not a concept to these peoples—in contrast to commonly accepted assertions of ethnologists influenced by patriarchy. Where would “monogamy” and “fatherhood” come from, considering the constantly changing composition of groups and the autonomy of women regarding partner choice?[70] In egalitarian societies it is impossible to lock up and supervise women “monogamously.” Nor can a developed matrilineal genealogy take shape across several generations, because daughters or sons can and do relocate to other groups as young adults. Thus, we have to assume that San and Pygmy groups divide themselves into age-related classes: children, young adults, adults, and elders. The concept of blood relationships does not exist. Group and age-class membership, not genealogy, is the organizing principle of society. And since individuals choose their group membership, whoever is traveling with the group at any given time is a member.[71]

A further consequence of this is that men and women do not necessarily need to leave their group to find lovers. They can also find them within their own age class inside the group, since, first of all, not all individuals are blood relatives, and second, even if they were, it would not matter to the partners. Without the concept of blood kinship there is also no “incest taboo”—this supposed “universal incest prohibition” is a much cited but unproven hypothesis. In these small communities it would make no sense at all. And when there is no problematic genetic inheritance, “incest” does not represent a health problem. Rather, this taboo, like other sexual prohibitions, represents a late patriarchal construct to control the erotic life of women through moral precepts and force.[72]

We have described here the form of the *age-class society*, which still exists among Africa’s oldest aboriginal peoples, the San and Pygmies. A multi-generational genealogy as we know it is still unknown in this type of society.[73] To understand the Palaeolithic social order, a comparison with these aboriginal peoples of Africa is highly relevant. It supports the assumption that, at those times, too, life was organized around smaller or larger egalitarian groups within an age-class society. At the same time, it shows that the mother line, or matrilineality—which arose long before the less obvious father line—is by no means a matter of course, but an important human insight from a later epoch arising from the primal mother-child group: the invention of genealogy. This could only emerge later as a principle of social order when large groups of humans began to form permanent settlements (Neolithic Era). Only then was it developed by women and led to the formation of the large kinship groups or clans related through the mother line, which are characteristic of matriarchal societies.

Language is probably the most important means for communicating, and thus for the formation of social groups. So now we turn to the question of how and when human speech developed. The Neanderthal women and men of the Middle Palaeolithic already had a well-developed language, as could be determined by ←56 | 57→their vocal organs.[74] This means that the origin of language must have been earlier, with the first people of the Lower Palaeolithic Era. Current theory claims once again that hunting led to speech, since men required coordination for big-game hunting: thus, men constructed language.[75]

Though some still defend this theory, it is absurd, since any hunter knows that silence is required in order not to alert the prey. It is also hardly likely that language arose around the campfire in narrating great deeds after the hunt, and likewise not during the production of ever-better hunting gear. This is because, historically, male organization for the hunt was not the elemental social group, but came later. Gathering came long before big-game hunting, and women coordinated and led that activity. Perhaps they communicated by calling out about good gathering locations or dangers lurking in the underbrush, since there was no danger of alarming the plants. However, these gatherers did not represent the primary social group, either.

The primary social form in all societies is the mother-child group. It originates at birth and continues during a nurturing period that lasts for years. Human newborns are not only quite undeveloped at birth, but require much longer—compared to the young of other species—to mature and grow into the social conditions around them. And so the mother-child group, as a highly developed form of care and socialization, becomes the basis of all other social groupings. All social forms depend on it and refer to it in one way or another, first as female organizational forms growing up around the birth and care of children, and likewise around further important stages in women's lives.[76] Such alliances among women represented an enduring female social form; it bound women together in strong solidarity through specialized knowledge. This applied only secondarily to men through their affiliations with women's lodgings. Even men's organization of the hunt was not independent of the women's group, as we shall see.

This again points to the centrality of women in social organization, going far beyond housing, food, and clothing. Women formed the nucleus of the whole society and ensured its cohesion with their social intelligence, derived from the mother-child group. From there the earliest language developed, arising out of the safe intimacy between mother and child: the tender lulling, the soothing songs, the warning call to the child in the case of danger; over time, this led increasingly to the formation of articulated syllables and words. Children imitated what they heard, and language capability grew with each generation. It is the "mother tongue" that developed this way, because each child, since the beginning, has learned language from its mother. This process presumably did not just begin with the Neanderthal women, but with the first human bipeds more than two million years ago.

The great importance of the mother for the emergence of language is likewise reflected in the primal syllables "ma, ba, an, na" which designate the maternal in all the world's languages. Babies say these syllables before their language ability develops. Furthermore, the first basic words identified by palaeolinguistics, with their variants in all languages, name female abilities, both directly ("woman, vulva, birth" etc.) or indirectly ("milk, child, kinship group" etc.), whereas nothing comparable exists in the male realm. These primary words not only indicate the role played by women in the origin of language, but also highlight the central significance of women in the Palaeolithic social order.[77]

Palaeolithic Culture and Religion: More than just “Hunting Magic”

Middle Palaeolithic: Religious Thoughts of the Neanderthal People

For questions about when culture and religiosity began, burials from these early epochs are of critical importance. Gravesites already dating from the Middle Palaeolithic have been found in caves and rock shelters (“abris”), which show that the Neanderthals buried their dead with awe. Such burial sites are known throughout the large area, where Neanderthals lived, which extends from the coast of Portugal in the west to the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the Zāgros Mountains (Northern Iraq) in the east. Neanderthal women and men even lived east of the Caspian Sea in Central Asia and in the south along the Mediterranean coast into Syria and Palestine/Israel. Their densest living areas were in the caves ←58 | 59→ of southwest France and Palestine/Israel. The latter region provided them with a warm Mediterranean zone where they stayed peaceably alongside modern humans (Cro-Magnon People) for around 50,000 years. They were very successful in adapting over time to the most varied climate zones and to the changing glacial and inter-glacial periods.[78]

Neanderthal burial sites (from 100,000 onwards) have been found widely scattered across this area, in the west in France (La-Chapelle-aux-Saints, La Ferrassie), in the Middle East in Palestine/Israel (Es-Skhul, Qafzeh), in the Zāgros Mountains (Shanidar) and in Turkestan in Central Asia (Teshik-Tash). In the cave near La Ferrassie, eight individuals were discovered, adults and children, lying in a fetal position. This has been described rather flatly and inaccurately as a “squat position”—since why should the dead squat rather than lie down? The graves were clearly delimited and marked by small hills heaped over them, and a stone slab engraved with little cup marks had been placed on one of them. In the Shanidar Cave in Iraq, the grave of an old, profoundly disabled man was found, covered with flowers (pollen analysis). This indicates great compassion, and during his lifetime as well, because without care of his group he would have hardly been able to live so long. All these burial sites contained grave goods: the children’s graves in La Ferrassie had unusually beautiful stone tools; a grave in the Qafzeh Cave had the antlers of a fallow deer laid in the hands of the deceased. But most striking were five ibex skulls with horns placed around a child’s grave of Teshik-Tash. All these finds indicate elaborate and meaningful death rituals.[79]

They show that Neanderthals were not at all “crude and primitive,” but had religious thoughts about death. They were capable of the symbolic thinking that seeks an explanation for the incomprehensible fact of death. The frequent cave burials themselves already had a symbolic meaning, since early humans must have regarded each cave as a womb of the primordial Mother Earth—a view that still exists in later cultures.[80] The fetal position of the dead, who lie there like unborn children, suggests this. Presumably people believed the dead would one day be reborn from Mother Earth, just as children are born to women. The grave goods also support this view, because most of them are useful tools, in the expectation of a new life where the deceased would need them. The dead were probably thought to be only sleeping in the womb of Mother Earth until their return. This means that Neanderthal women and men already had a *belief in rebirth*, however simple it may have been.

←59 | 60→

This belief is confirmed by the use of ochre, the first pigment used by humans. Clumps of ochre, which can be made into powder, contain iron and have a reddish coloring reminiscent of living flesh and blood. In all its shades the color ochre symbolizes life. Traces of ochre strewn on the dead were already found in Neanderthal graves, and it was surely meant to give the dead life energy and hope for rebirth. This use of ochre extended throughout the Palaeolithic: the dead were ever more richly dusted with it, and it was painted on graves and large surfaces in caves (for example Gargas and Saint-Marcel, France). Cave niches resembling vulvas were painted red, as if to emphasize the cave's female nature. A short passage colored with ochre was also found leading to the outside from the nose and mouth of a dead person, no doubt indicating the breath of life (Grimaldi, Italy). In some dwellings, the floor had intensive ochre coloring (for example, Pincevent, France), which shows that ochre was finally used in everyday life, perhaps for body painting, and for coloring skins and objects to endow them with life energy. Even the colors used in the splendid rock paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic were made by burning ochre: red, yellow, and brown; and from magnesium oxide: violet and black.[81]

Particular fossils such as spherical sea creatures, snail shells, seashells, and especially cowry shells, which Neanderthal women and men collected, also suggest religious thoughts. Worn on the body or deposited in shelters, they were not merely "decoration." The symbolic meaning of the cowry shell, from the most ancient times up to the present, is clear: it symbolizes the woman's vulva.[82] Snail shells, with their spiral forms, and other round fossils, or those naturally resembling small fat figures, have similar symbolic content: for humans, they symbolized the womb, or the egg, or even a female figure, since they look like precursors of later female figurines. Even cut stones in the shape of small female figures were found in these early dwellings.[83]

All these are female symbols and complement the beliefs of Palaeolithic people about death. They believed that each birth was at the same time a return to life, a rebirth of those who had died. The facts of procreation were not known (as noted above). Under these conditions, the idea arose that woman—like Mother ←60 | 61→Earth—created new life from herself. She was seen as the guarantor of rebirth, gifted with a miraculous capability to turn death to life and return the dead to the world. These beliefs were held for hundreds of millennia, as the myths of primordial goddesses show, who brought forth children from themselves through "parthenogenesis."[84] According to this belief, which still exists among indigenous peoples, the woman forms the child from her own menstruation blood, which stops flowing during the nine months of pregnancy,[85] as the concept of “blood kinship” still reflects. In some parts of the world, this ancient belief in rebirth has survived up to the present, and it lasted in Europe until erased by Christianity. In the Upper Palaeolithic period, people no longer searched for these meaningful symbols on the beach, but created their own, as the countless vulva symbols and female figurines show.

The so-called “skull cult,” which extends from Neanderthal times throughout the Palaeolithic and beyond, should also be understood in this context. Skulls were found that had been processed and given segregated burials, often arranged in groups, as in the Ofnet Cave, and sometimes dusted with ochre, suggesting religious meaning.[86] In birth, it is the head of the child that emerges first, and after it has passed through the birth canal, the birth is nearly complete. Perhaps the thought that these heads would emerge first in rebirth from Mother Earth’s womb underlay the burial of skulls in caves. The skull stands as symbolic part for the whole person, which is why skulls were separated from bodies and buried in especially holy places.

Such symbolic thinking required a capacity for abstract thought, and that, too, is already evident in the Neanderthal people. They created the first abstract signs, such as crossed lines (Fig. 1).[87] This cross is observational, based on the four directions toward which its ends point. The primary line is the east-west direction, gained by observing the daily rising and setting of celestial bodies. Neanderthal people already recognized this, since they gave their burials an east-west orientation. In a further abstraction, they added a vertical north-south line. With this they achieved the first ordering of space—a great intellectual advance still reflected in our compass today. This four-sided spatial order was also expressed by an ideogram with four corners scratched in stone and bone: the quadrangle, in its simple or multiple forms.

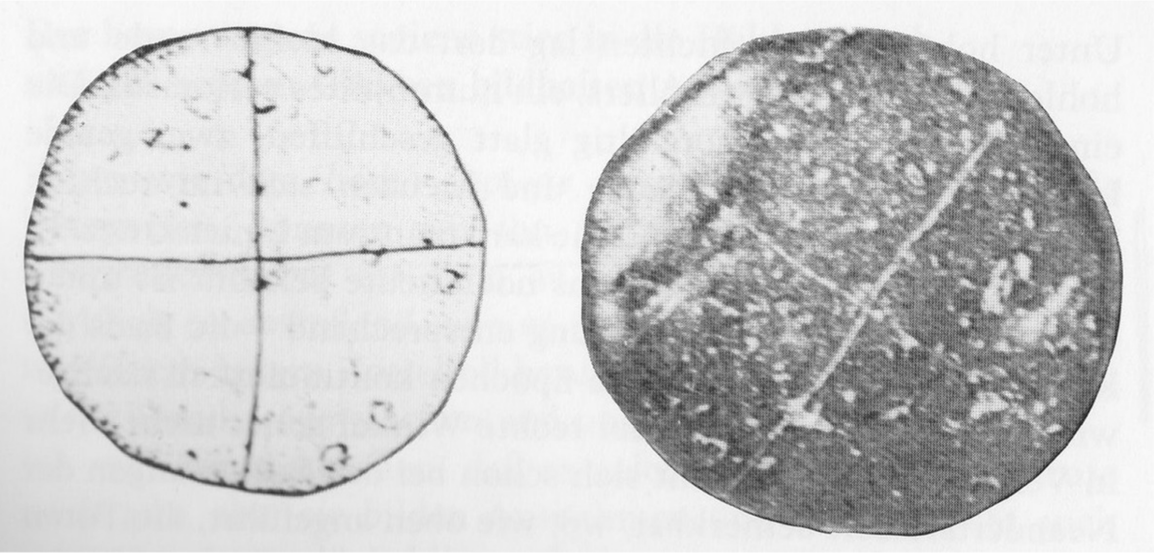


Fig. 1: The ring-cross, engraved on a polished stone, Middle Palaeolithic (Hungary)

Crossed lines combined with a ring, or ring-cross, are even conceived as three-dimensional (see Fig. 1). The upper arch refers to celestial bodies, which move by day and night from east to west across the heavens. Yet the question remained: why do they always rise again in the east—how do they get there? In response they imagined that the sun, moon and stars also traversed an invisible lower arch in the Underworld, which brought them back from west to east. The lower arch of the ring-cross represents this. The world's three-dimensionality was expressed not only with the ring-cross, but also with the sphere divided into an upper and lower hemisphere. This form they found in nature or reproduced it themselves, which shows how meaningful it was for them. It represented space, divided into the vault of heaven and the vault below, with the Earth in-between.[88]

From observing the heavens, in a further intellectual accomplishment, Neanderthals also created the first order of time. This is based on the three visible phases of the moon, which recur regularly at all the Earth's latitudes, dividing the flow of time into equal parts. They also represented this temporal triad with ←62 | 63→ideograms scratched in bones and stone: three parallel marks, or the abstract sign of a triangle.[89] From the triad, the number nine was developed, because each visible phase of the moon comprises three times three, or nine nights. Therefore, it could be seen for 27 nights. Add the one night of the invisible phase, and the result is a lunar month of 28 days. The Neanderthals discovered this way of counting and developed it into a lunar calendar. Regular groups of three signs in bones could therefore be records of this counting method and thus of the first lunar calendar.[90] All these abstract signs were carved extensively in stone in the caves of Île-de-France. These are much older than the magnificent cave paintings of Upper Paleolithic humans.[91]

This is what little can be said with certainty about the religiosity of Neanderthal women and men, but it is fundamental. They passed these earliest insights on to early modern humans of the Upper Palaeolithic, for these basic ideas never died out.[92]

Upper Palaeolithic: Cave Art and Portable Art

The Upper Palaeolithic shows the rapid development of culture among early modern humans right from the beginning. The archaeological evidence of their religious art—there was no separation between art and religion from the beginning up to our Middle Ages—extends from the Atlantic to the Urals, and even further to Lake Baikal in Siberia. Two kinds of art occur. First, there is permanent art on the walls of caves and abris, consisting of scratch drawings, paintings, and bas-reliefs. These are limited to mountainous regions and appear most often in the caves of Spain and France, but also in Italy and in one cave in the Ural Mountains.[93] Second, there is portable art, consisting of carved figurines and sculptures, as well as scratch drawings and paintings on bone, horn, and thousands of stones. Both types of art date from the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic period, but portable art continued for longer and spread much further, including to areas where there were no caves. In addition, abstract symbols such as lines, dots, and line combinations such as net and crosshatch patterns appeared both in cave paintings and on portable objects.

In this huge geographical area, during tens of millennia, these art forms used a homogenous system of symbols that perpetuated basic ideas from the Middle Palaeolithic. There are two dominant themes: on the one hand, animals, and on the other, women or vulvas. These appear in the monumental cave paintings just as they do in small portable sculptures. In caves, the drawings and paintings are generally in a hidden section, far to the back, which shows their separation from everyday life and makes them more sacred. These caves were thus symbolically ornamented "nature temples," and were used as central, fixed sanctuaries. Overall, the cave remained a sacred space even in later cultural epochs; however, it was artificially recreated in pyramids, temples, and even Gothic cathedrals. Movable sculptures, on the other hand, were portable relics that could be carried anywhere. They could be set up in ritual order for ceremonial celebrations, and were no less sacred than the caves.

With regard to the two main themes, for many years no better interpretation of both animals and women or vulvas was put forth than solely "hunting magic" or "fertility cult"—wrong in both cases. Moreover, their artistic representation did not develop gradually in the Upper Palaeolithic, but was fully formed from the outset. The theme of "animals" already appears in the first phase of the Upper Palaeolithic (Aurignacian, 40,000-32,000) in the depictions of animal herds with breathtaking perspective and dynamism in the Chauvet Cave (Ardèche Gorge, France); these are planned, highly spectacular compositions (Fig. 2). The theme "women" has been documented from the same early time by the recently discovered voluptuous female figurine from Hohle Fels (Swabian Jura, Germany). It is thought to be the world's oldest representations of women (Fig. 3). The vulva symbol is also present from the very beginning, even threefold, as in a deep engraving from Abri Castanet (Dordogne, France).[94] However, this is only surprising if one does not consider the preceding tens of millennia of artistic practice by early modern humans in Africa, who brought their art with them to Europe.

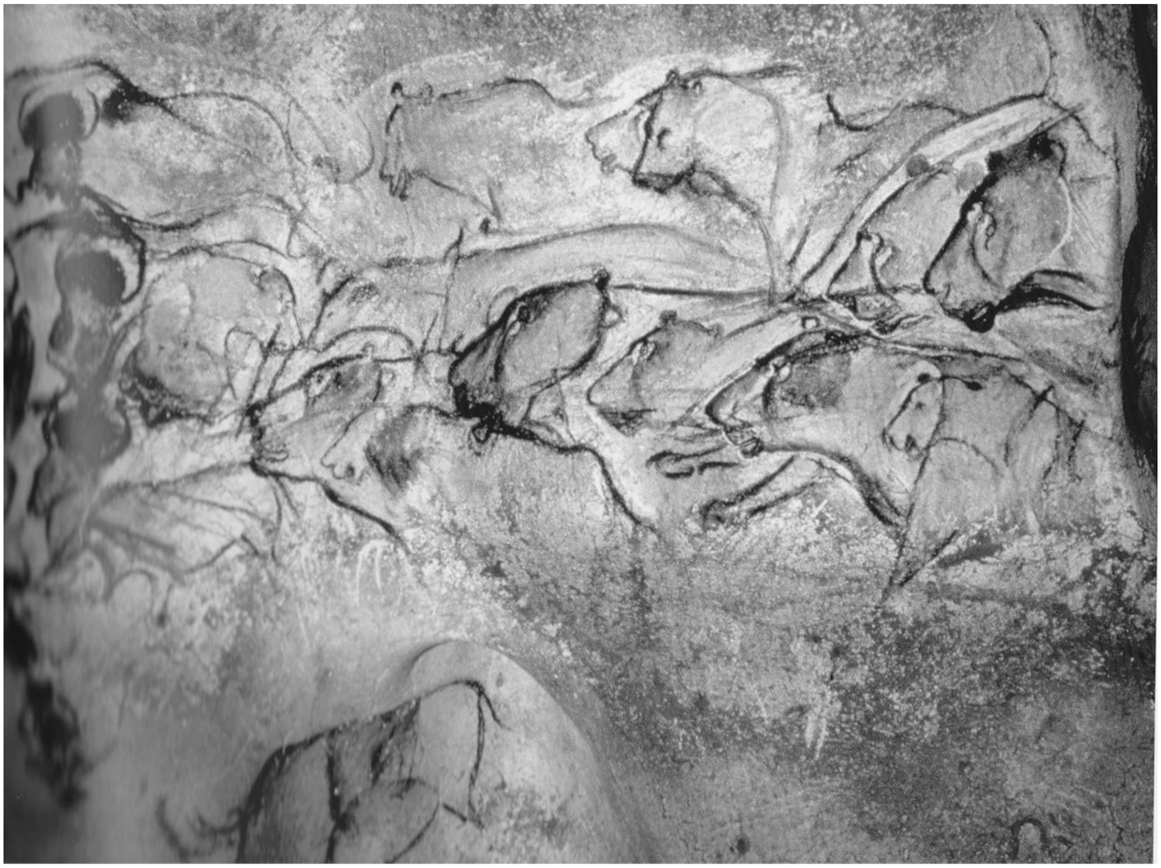
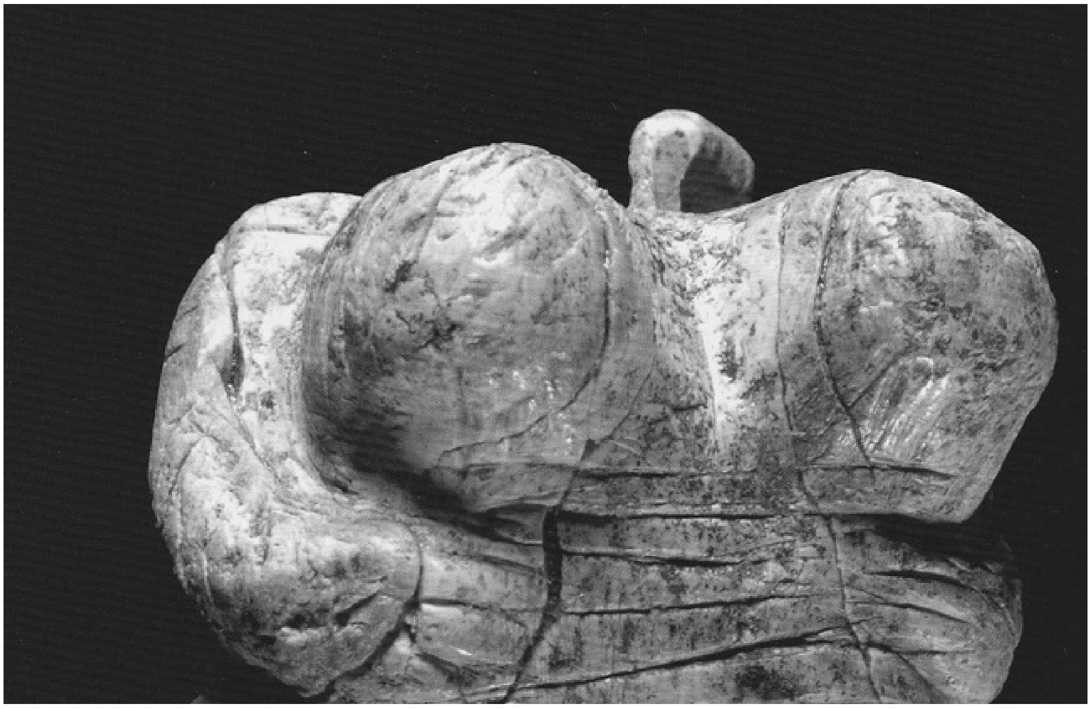


Fig. 2: Lions moving dynamically, Chauvet Cave, Upper Palaeolithic, Aurignacien (France) (Wikimedia Commons, author: Claude Valette)



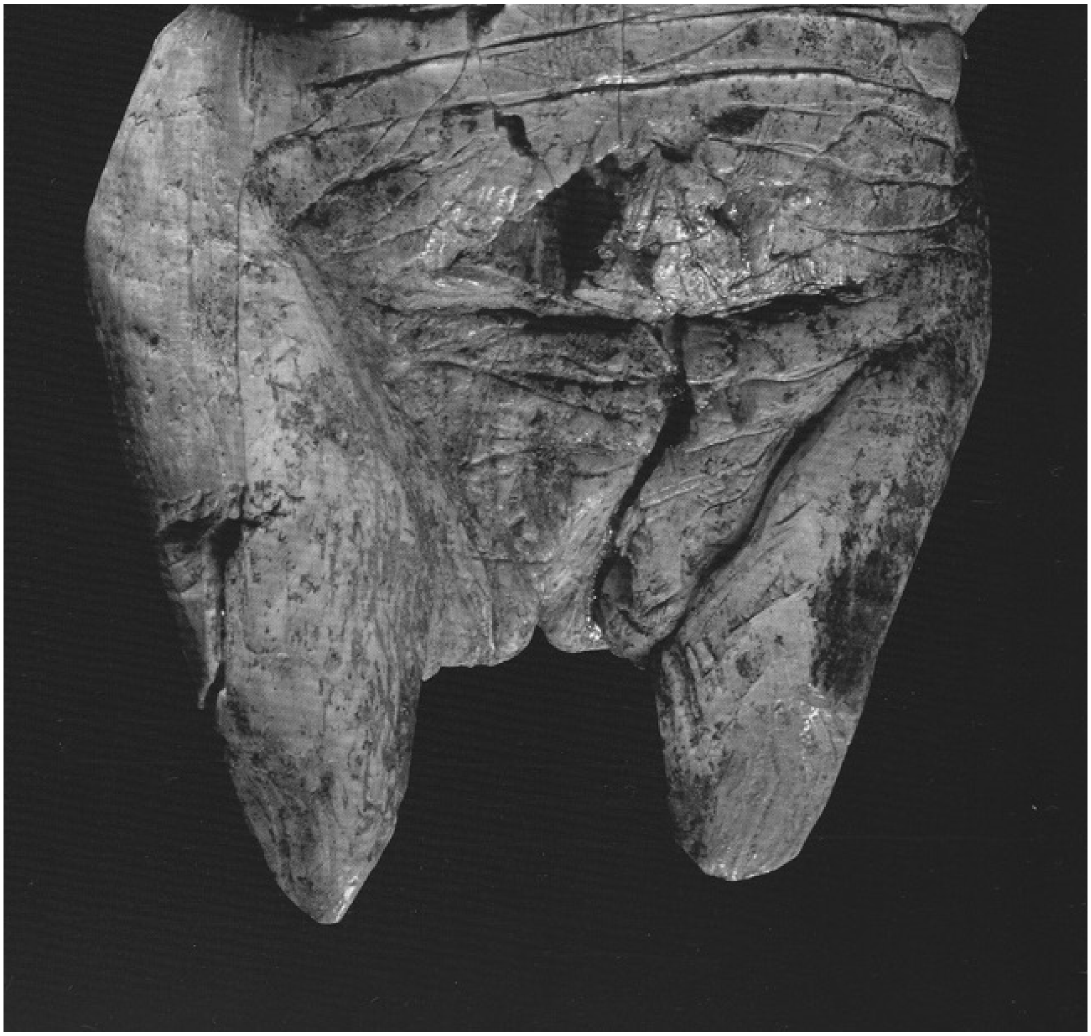


Fig. 3: Female figurine from Hohle Fels, Upper Palaeolithic, Aurignacien (Germany)

←64 | 65→

The Theme of “women”

First let us look more closely at the theme of “women and vulvas.” The abstract vulva sign is older than the figurines; it is one of the oldest and most common of all signs.[95] The Neanderthals already scratched it into rock walls as a triangle with a short line (“slit”) or cup (“hole”) at the center (for example, in a cave near Larchant, France) (Fig. 4). The triangle was both an ideogram for the moon and for the order of time, and reveals a symbolic connection made between the moon and women from the earliest times. The female figurines of the Upper Palaeolithic—and on through all later epochs, even up to the present among some indigenous peoples—display a pronounced pubic triangle (see Fig. 3). ←65 | 66→ This pubic triangle is always represented, whereas, depending on the given style, breasts may be ample, small or even lacking completely. The emphasis on these female traits has led to misleading names like the complimentary “Venus” or the contemptuous “dirty dolls,” both channeling today’s male-sexist perspectives. Some scholars shamefully go so far as to call the figurines objects of sexual desire for Palaeolithic men—reflecting patriarchal conditions in our own times.

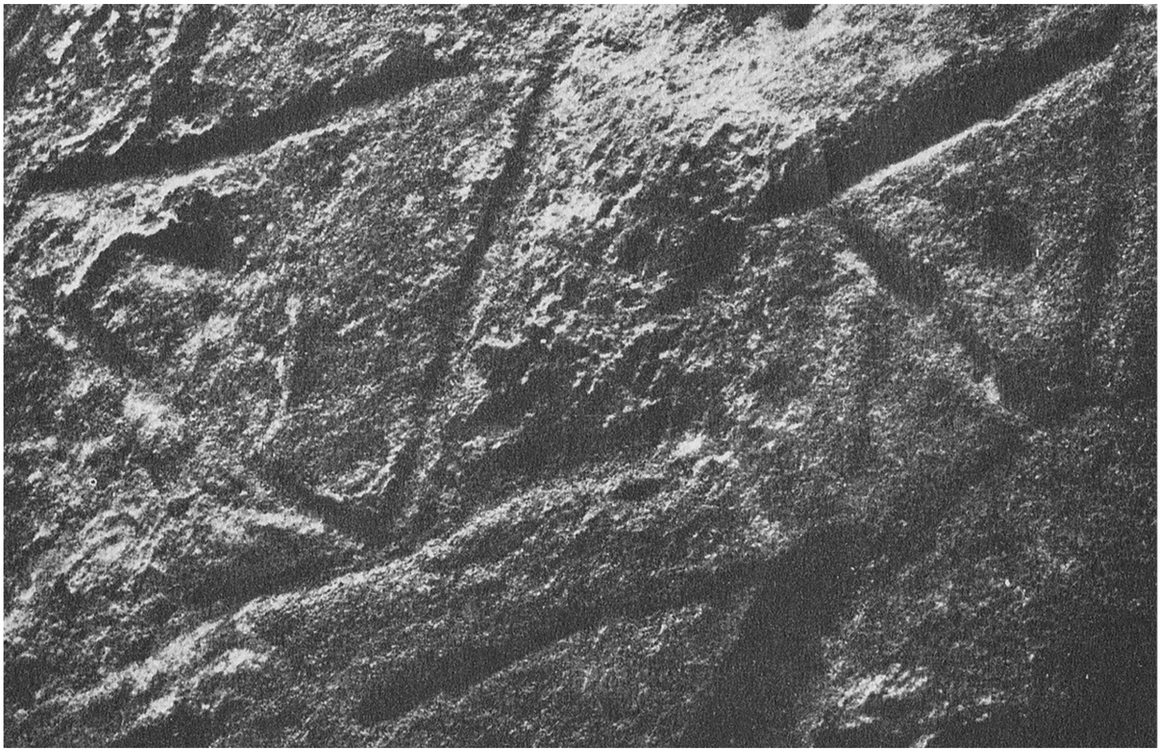


Fig. 4: Triangles as vulva symbols, cave in the “Dame Jouante” Mountain near Larchant, Middle Palaeolithic (France)

On the contrary, the connection between women and the moon had a sacred meaning for the people of the Upper Palaeolithic: like the moon, women have a temporal sequence insofar as their menstrual cycle corresponds to the cycles of the moon. Women have, so to speak, an inner moon-clock. This is best expressed in the famous relief of the Woman of Laussel (France, Gravettian, 32,000-24,000), from the phase that represents the high point of this art, with 200 female figures, produced throughout Europe and all the way to Siberia (Fig. 5). The Laussel Woman's raised right hand is holding a bison horn with exactly 13 incisions. This horn symbolizes the moon which, due to its increasing and decreasing shape, is generally depicted as a horn. The 13 incisions correspond to the year's 13 lunar ←66 | 67→months. With her left hand, the Laussel Woman is pointing to her womb as if to show that she also carries the temporal sequence of the moon in the sky in her body's menstrual cycle. In addition, the relief was colored with ochre, traces of which are still visible. Ochre symbolizes the color of life, since menstrual blood was seen as the "blood of life." Women held the knowledge of these earthly-cosmic correspondences, so they were probably the ones who developed the Palaeolithic lunar calendar and depicted it in different ways: in triangles, vulvas, and figures.

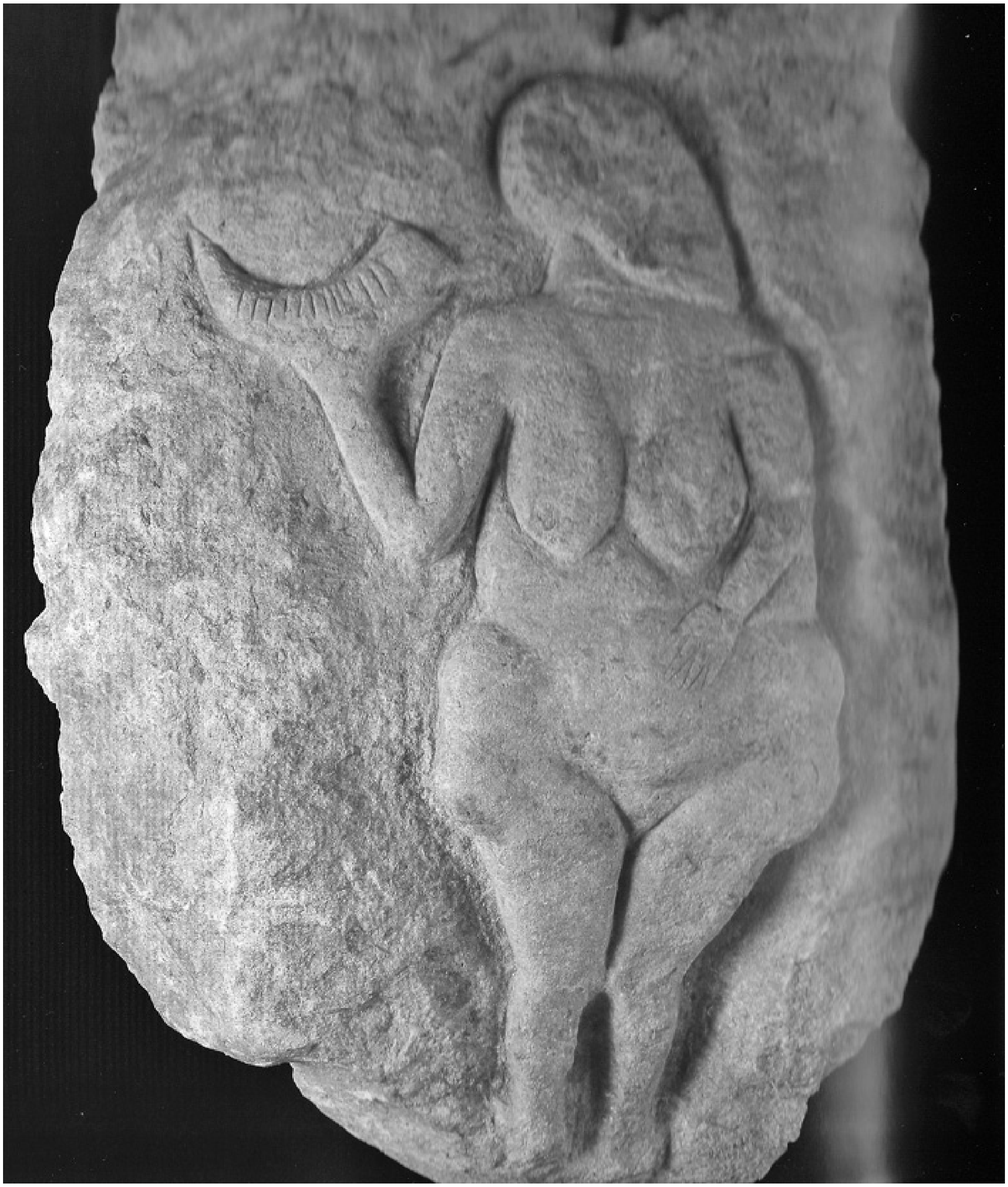


Fig. 5: The Woman of Laussel, Upper Palaeolithic, Gravettien (France)

Early on the number three, which stood for the moon and its temporal order, led to the concept of the lunar trinity, a threefold entity that is really only one. This thought was then also applied to women, for the Palaeolithic Era already saw the development of a female trinity that would influence later epochs. Correspondingly, the Laussel Woman on her limestone rock beneath an abri is not alone, but accompanied by two smaller figures in similar pose on nearby stones.[96] A female trinity appears unambiguously on the rock relief of the Abri Bourdois (Angles-sur-l’Anglin, Vienne, France), where three nearly life-size female figures are to be seen together (Fig. 6). Pubic triangles with explicit vulva slits are sculpted in all three cases, and above them bellies with navels are shown in three stages of pregnancy. This clearly depicts the passage of time, which again indicates a temporal correspondence between woman and the moon, since the course of a pregnancy lasts for three times three, that is nine lunar months.[97]

←67 | 68→

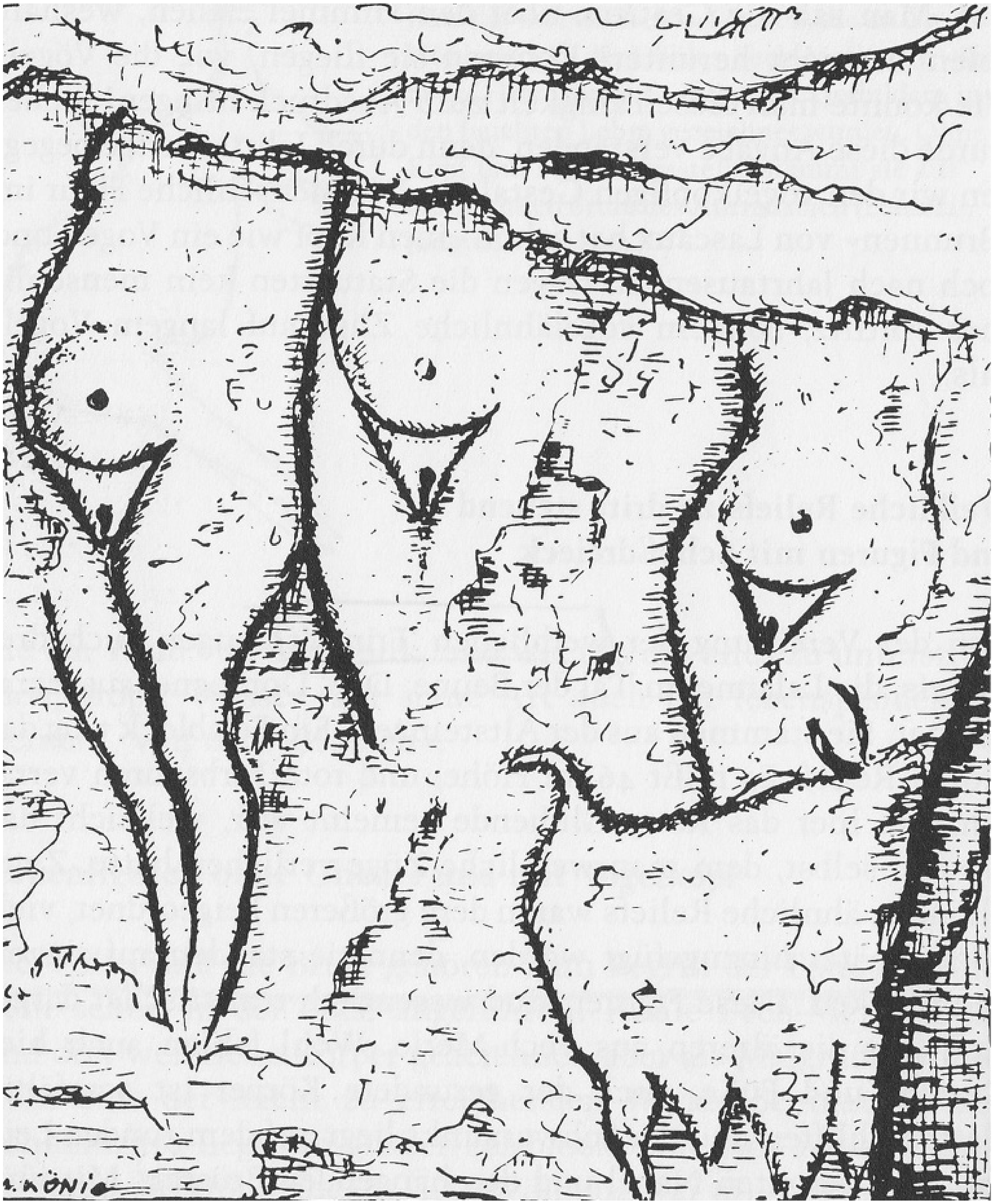


Fig. 6: Three female figures above an image of a bull or cow, Upper Palaeolithic, Magdalénien (France)

Similarly, the many female figurines with their full-figured bodies, such as the Woman of Hohle Fels, the Woman of Willendorf, and the Woman of Lespugue—to name only the best known of many examples—

are not so-called “fat ladies.” Instead, their round bellies and full breasts indicate pregnancy. These representations of pregnancy do not relate to a “fertility cult,” but to rebirth through woman. She is—like the moon—the mistress of time, which leads from life to death and through rebirth from death again to life. For Palaeolithic people, the same sequence of events was evident in the moon above them: the new moon waxes and grows full, then wanes and disappears, or “dies,” only to be “born again” as a new moon. In this sense, pregnancy is directly connected with the hope of rebirth through woman, and it represents, like the vulva and female ←68 | 69→figure, the central symbol in a religion of rebirth. Thus, we can see that the religious thinking of Palaeolithic women and men was deep and rich, and anything but a primitive “fertility cult.” And we must assume that women played a leading role in the development of this religion.

The appropriate naming of these figures, whether they are large on rock walls or small as portable art objects, would thus be “Primordial Mother.” This name probably comes closest to the understanding of Palaeolithic people who worshiped the miracle of birth and rebirth. Here the designation Primordial Mother points in two directions: first to “Grandmother Moon”—as the moon is called by many indigenous peoples,[98]—and also to Mother Earth. The very rounded form of the female figures can also be understood to replicate the round Mother Earth or the full Mother Moon, since in this earliest religion the concepts: Earth—woman—moon—temporal sequence of life, death, and rebirth formed a symbolic continuum.

←69 | 70→The culturally rich Gravettian ended with the extreme cold of the Solutrean (23,000-20,000), followed again by a milder period (Magdalenian 20,000–12,000). During the Magdalenian the important cave sanctuaries with their richly multicolored painting were created. Once again, the portable female figurines predominated, but now in an entirely different style. They were engraved on slate slabs and shown in dance scenes (for example, Goennersdorf, Rhineland, Germany) or produced in large numbers as miniature sculptures, only the size of pendants. The tendency to abstraction superseded the earlier rounded form for head, breasts, belly, and hips. Female bodies were almost reduced to a line without head and arms, showing tiny protrusions for the breasts and a large triangular one for the buttocks (Fig. 7 a, b). The significant triangle code is transferred from the pubic triangle to the emphasized lower body, but the meaning remains the same: the woman's womb is where new life originates.

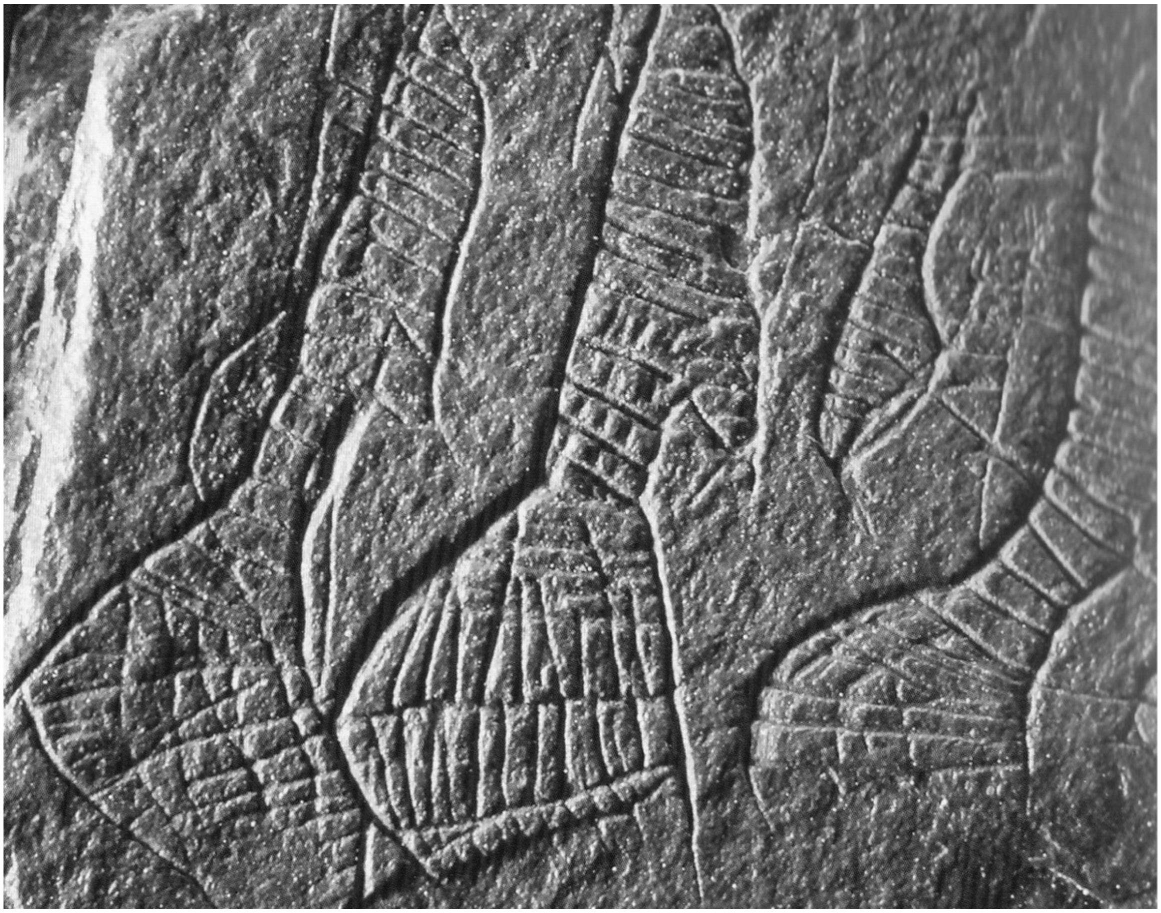


Fig. 7a: Female figures, engraved on plates of slate, Upper Palaeolithic, Magdalénien (Germany)

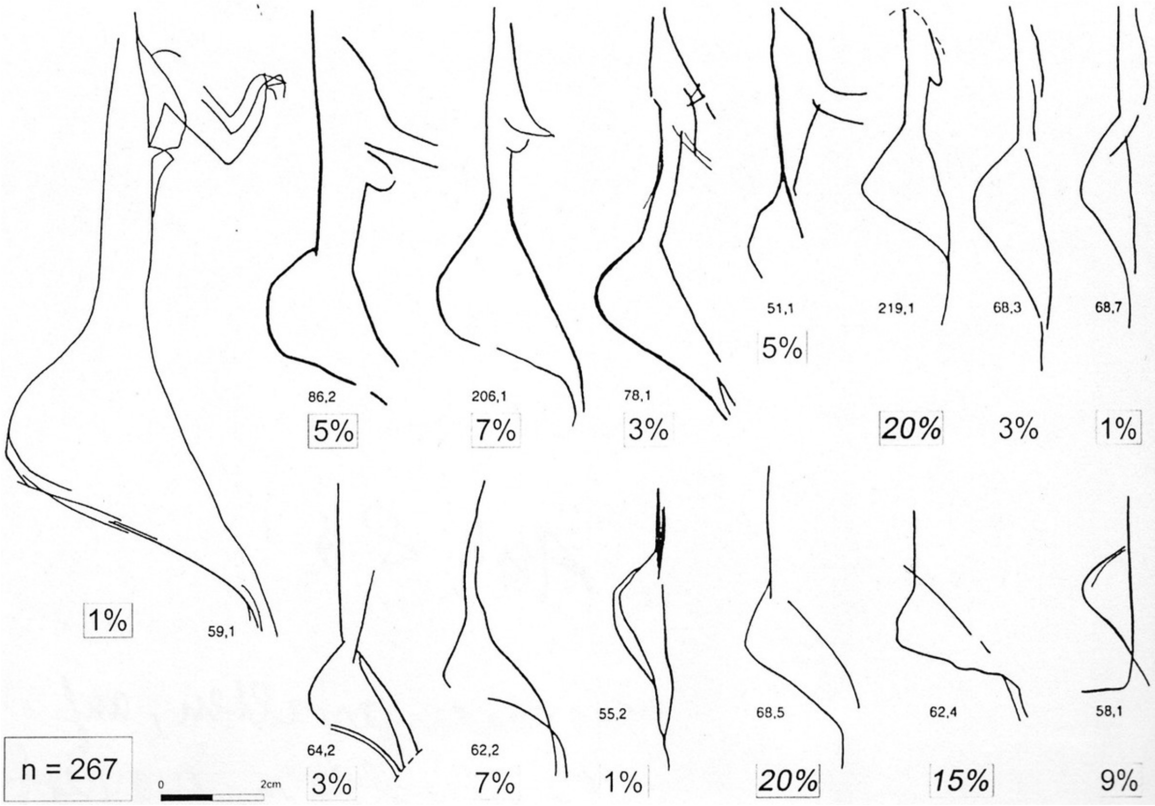
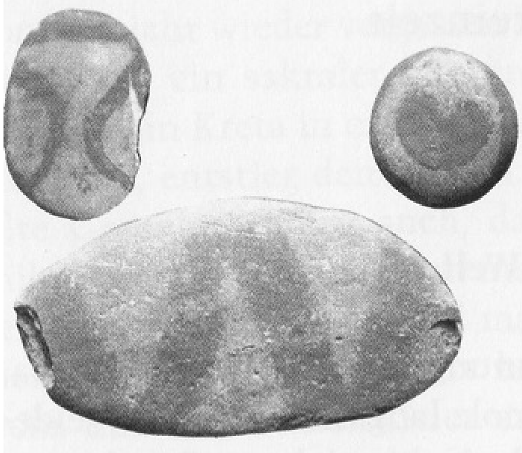


Fig. 7b: Increasing schematization, leading from abstract figure to cipher

This is a remarkable transformation from a fully formed individual figure to an emblematic symbol. Apparently, the rebirth religion it represented had ←70 | 71→ become so widespread and standardized that an abstract sign was enough to evoke its content. At the same time this sign also signified “protection,” like the protection offered by the cave and a mother’s womb. The symbol was worn as an amulet for this reason—not unlike the Christian custom of wearing the cross to symbolize protection and hope for resurrection. This is also the case for the engravings on the floor of the large round shelter in Goennersdorf: the emblematic symbols signified protection for all who lived there and for those who came and went. This protective function, as defense against dangerous powers, also applied to the vulva sign, probably from the earliest times, and it survived for many millennia. The Sheela-na-gig figures on the portals of Irish churches show this, displaying their vulvas to keep evil powers away.[99] It can also be seen in the ancient belief that women, by lifting their skirts to reveal the vulva, radiate such protective power that they will cause enemy warriors to flee.[100]

←71 | 72→

Another important idea follows on from this: the reduction of important content from picture to symbolic sign leads to pictography. This is the process we see here. Since the Middle Palaeolithic, humans continuously used abstract lines and dots (small cups), crossed lines, quadrangles, triangles, net patterns and many other codes to express the complex content of their world view. In this sense, there are no cultures without writing, since humans were writing from the beginning.[101] One cannot declare that cultures were "without writing" throughout enormously long epochs of human history just because researchers cannot read their codes and signs today! Nor can writing be reduced to nothing but phonetic signs. In this context, it is interesting that, in the Azilian, the last phase of ice age cultures (12,000–10,700), the old system of signs and counting was maintained, even though figural and pictorial works were no longer produced. Many painted pebbles have been found (for example, in the Mas D'Azil Cave, Ariège, France) with lines and dots in red, repeated so often that this cannot be accidental (Fig. 8). This is a concrete indication that, with these "painted pebbles," the ideographic writing first developed by the Neanderthals and retained throughout the entire Upper Palaeolithic was definitely passed on.[102]



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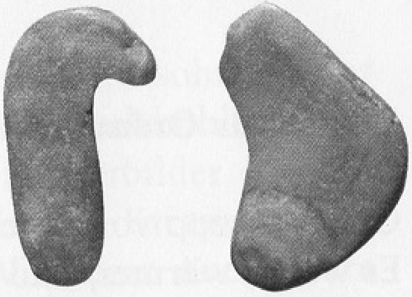

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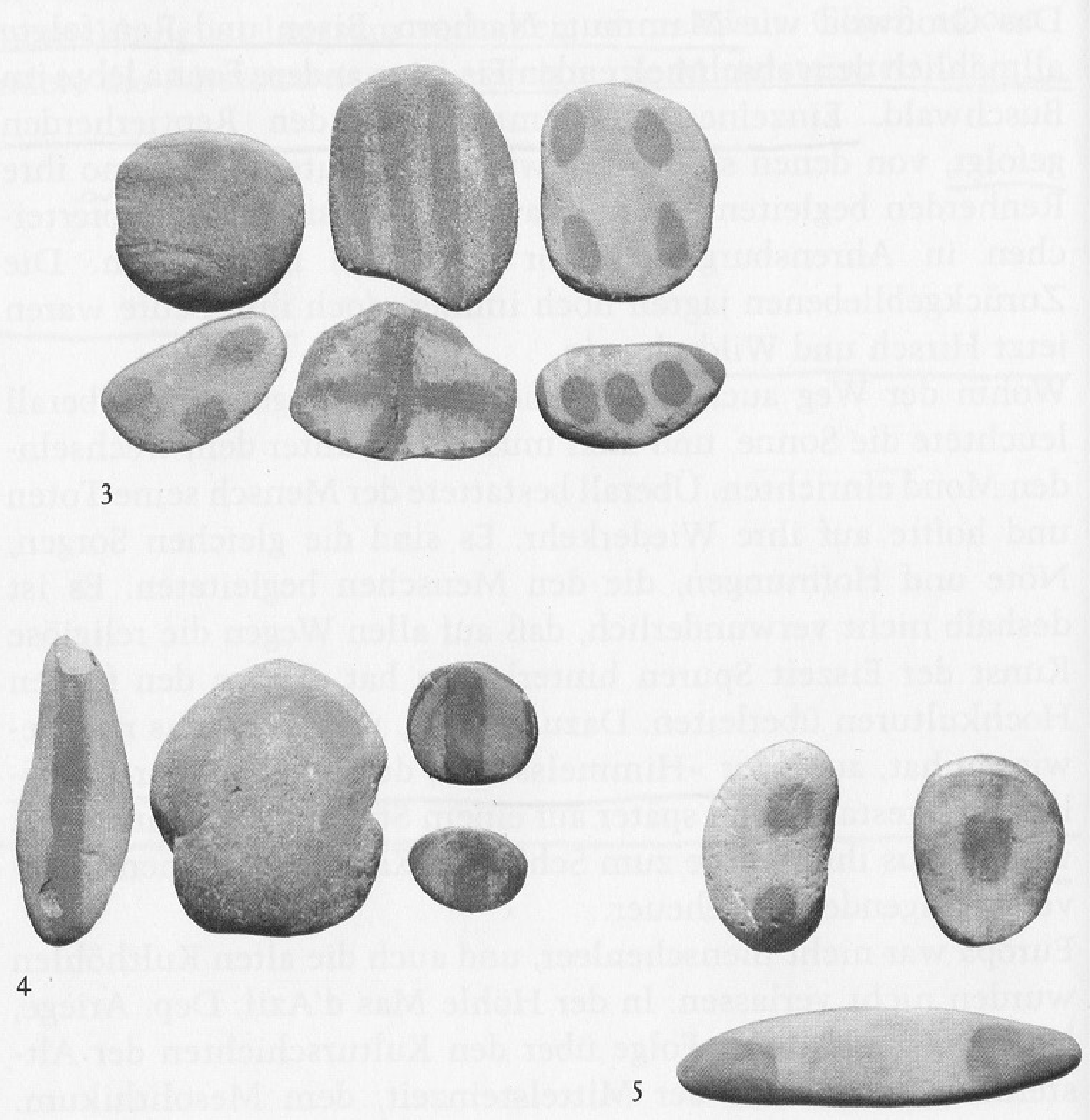

Fig. 8: Pebbles with signs, Upper Palaeolithic, Azilien (France)

The Theme of “animals”

In the Magdalenian (20,000-12,000), humans created magnificent animal paintings in the many cave sanctuaries of France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.[103] This art begins in the Aurignacian, already fully formed, and reaches its high point in the Magdalenian, only to end abruptly in the Azilian.

In the cave drawings and paintings—but also in the small sculptures of portable art—all land mammals larger than a deer appear; they were the ones populating the world of Palaeolithic humans. A few of these animal images in the caves are connected with drawings of spears and arrows, so for a very long time the interpretation predominated that this was all about “hunting magic.” ←72 | 73→Scholars imagined that these pictures were produced in a ritual to ensure a successful hunt in the outer world. Behind this is the thought that humans wanted to control the animal world through magic because they were dependent on killing and butchering.

Even disregarding the notion that “control” and “killing” to gain “power over nature” does not exactly reflect Palaeolithic thought, but is more characteristic of patriarchal thought, certain facts speak against this interpretation. Many drawings show animals that were not hunted: lions, bears and rhinoceroses appear. Additionally, the animal world represented varies according to the regional environment. In the cold zones north of the Alps there are pictures of mammoths, wooly rhinos and reindeer; south of the Alps we see pictures of warmth-loving animals like wild donkeys and wild pigs; and in mountain regions there are ibex, ←73 | 74→chamois, and megaloceros deer.[104] Nevertheless, the absolute majority of animals shown are bison and wild horses, the most frequently hunted animals.

Even this does not support the idea of “hunting magic,” however, because otherwise all these animals would have to be depicted with killing tools, which is not the case. Most of them are standing or walking quite peacefully; they are huddled together or leaping about, but are never shown as aggressive. Even the predatory animals depicted are not attacking other animals or threatening humans.[105] This indicates that these pictures are not about practical goals such as hunting, but that the animals serve to represent themes with general validity for Palaeolithic people.

These are themes we have already seen in the representations of women and vulvas: they revolve around the rebirth religion. From the Palaeolithic Era on, until the epoch when humans, as “the pinnacle of creation,” separated themselves from the rest of the living world, they saw themselves as embedded in Mother Nature, not higher or lower than other living beings. We can see here that their religious motifs did not apply to themselves alone, but also to plants and animals. They experienced the awakening of vegetation in the short summer months, and its disappearance in winter, then its return from the earth the next summer. This, too, was a cycle of growth, death, and rebirth—as is shown in detail by later agrarian religions. The same was true of the animal world: the animals died, but they too returned through rebirth as young animals.

From the earliest times, the holy site of rebirth was the cave, the Earth’s womb. In this belief system, from here animals returned to life, like humans, reborn from the Mother Earth. This applied to all animal species, but especially to those most frequently hunted. It was even more important that these animals, so crucial for human life, should return in great numbers. And so, very often, it was bison and wild horses that were painted on the cave walls. Most animal images are not found at the cave’s entrance area, but generally far to the rear, as if humans wanted to ensure the animals really resided in Mother Earth’s deepest womb.

They probably did not create and view these images with artistic criteria in mind—as we do today—but connected them with religious thoughts. The animal pictures were probably alive for them, just as such images still are today among indigenous peoples. In this sense, Palaeolithic humans brought animal souls into Mother Earth’s womb with their paintings, hoping she might again ←74 | 75→bring them forth into the world in flesh and blood. They were not able to transport the flesh and bones of the dead animals to her; as a rule, these were needed for food or tools. However, a series of animal burials have also been found, sometimes entire carcasses, but most often bones, which indicate the same religious beliefs.[106] Possibly they brought the animals’ blood into the caves for their paintings and used it to paint their “souls” onto the walls, before they replaced this permanently with ochre. A soulful quality, we believe, is reflected in the peaceful state of the depicted animals, freed for a time in the womb of Earth from the dangers of life.[107]

There are direct allusions to the theme of the “death and rebirth” of animals. For one, the rear part of the Great Hall of the famous Lascaux

Cave (France) has two older pictures entirely in ochre that were later covered by the outlines of the large bulls: on the left one sees a collapsing bull, the “death” theme; on the right one sees a cow with calf, the theme of “rebirth” (Fig. 9 a, b). The location of these two symbolic images is important; they are near the rear exit, so that everyone who passes through sees them. Analogously, the pictures showing animals hit by spears and arrows, wounded, and even vertically falling down represent the theme of “death.”[108] On the other hand, the pictures of pregnant cows, or animals linked to the vulva sign, female breasts, and even fully drawn female figures represent the theme of “rebirth.”[109] This is especially clear in a rock painting from the Ural Mountains, from the rear chamber of a cave, where a large reclining female figure can be seen in red paint giving birth to a wild bull (Fig. 10 a).[110]

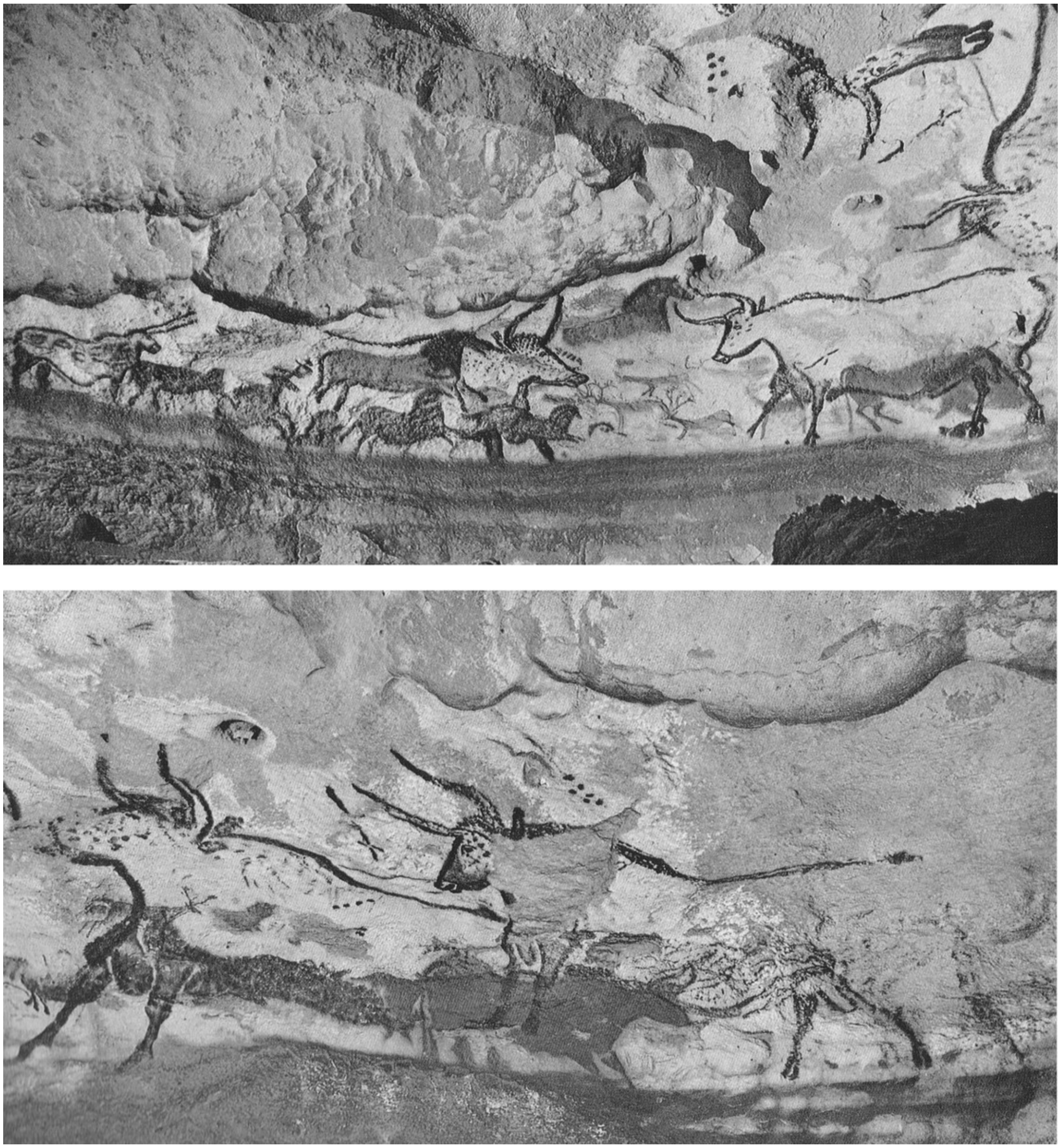

Fig. 9a, b: Paintings in the Great Hall of the Lascaux Cave, Upper Palaeolithic, Magdalénien (France)

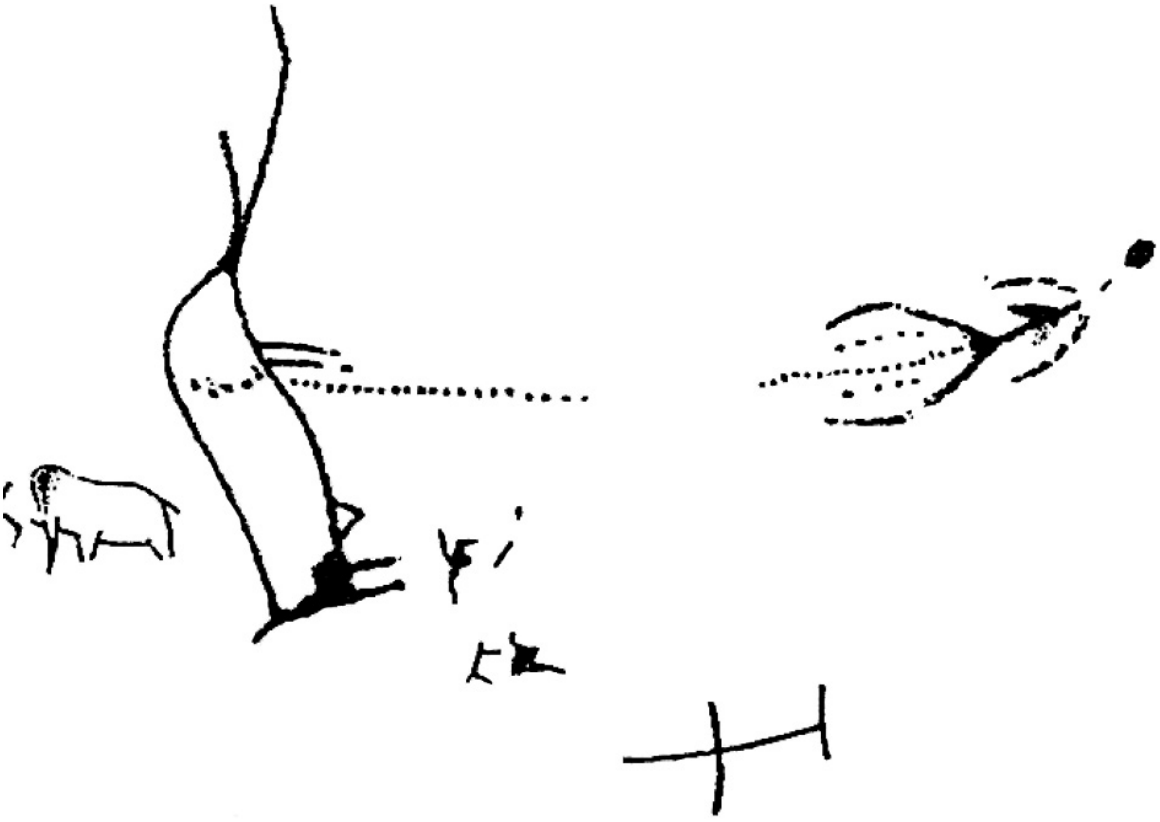

Fig. 10a: Rock engraving, Oasis Tiout, Sahara (Algeria) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after Leo Frobenius)

There exist many examples among indigenous hunting peoples that support the interpretation that the animal world was also included in the rebirth religion. ←75 | 76→They are familiar with the custom of placating the ancestral mothers of killed animals with song, dance, and other cultural gifts, so they will send new animals, born again. The keepers of this rebirth religion are naturally women. Therefore, among these indigenous peoples it is women who initiate men into rituals of the hunt and who watch over their hunting practice. Among the North American Iroquois there were two women's hunting societies responsible for maintaining spiritual contact with the animals and teaching the hunters and fishermen correct ←76 | 77→and respectful behavior toward them, since otherwise the animal's ancestral mothers would no longer send young animals back into this world from the world beyond. As keepers of death and rebirth, women alone were seen as mediators between the animals and hunters.[111]

According to the mythology of the indigenous Ainu in North Japan and on the Kurile Islands, it is Mother Earth whose daughters and sons are the land animals, and Mother Water who gives them the water animals. These goddesses once introduced the men to the hunting and fishing rituals so that they would carry out these activities respectfully—meaning that it was once the women who taught the men these rituals. Only when an animal soul comes home to its female animal ancestors with human gifts like songs and woodcarvings do they send further descendants for the hunt. All the hunting peoples of northern Asia share this belief, and it extends back into Palaeolithic times.[112]

Especially significant in this context is a Palaeolithic rock drawing from the Tiout Oasis in the Sahara Atlas Mountains (Algeria) with a motif that occurs multiple times in Africa. It shows an elevated female figure with raised arms, perhaps in a ritual robe or with wings, looking toward a hunter with a bow and arrow. He is about to shoot an arrow at an ostrich (Fig. 10 b). A line goes from the woman’s womb to the man’s genitals or navel; this has nothing to do with sexuality, but designates him as her son. The man with the bow and arrow symbol stands unambiguously for the theme of “death.” The motherly woman, on the other hand, whose vulva brought him forth, stands for the themes of “life” and “rebirth,” and not only human rebirth, but also that of all the animals surrounding her. At the same time, her raised arms show that, only with her permission and blessing, is he allowed to hunt and kill, and must do so “respectfully,” as the indigenous hunting peoples say.

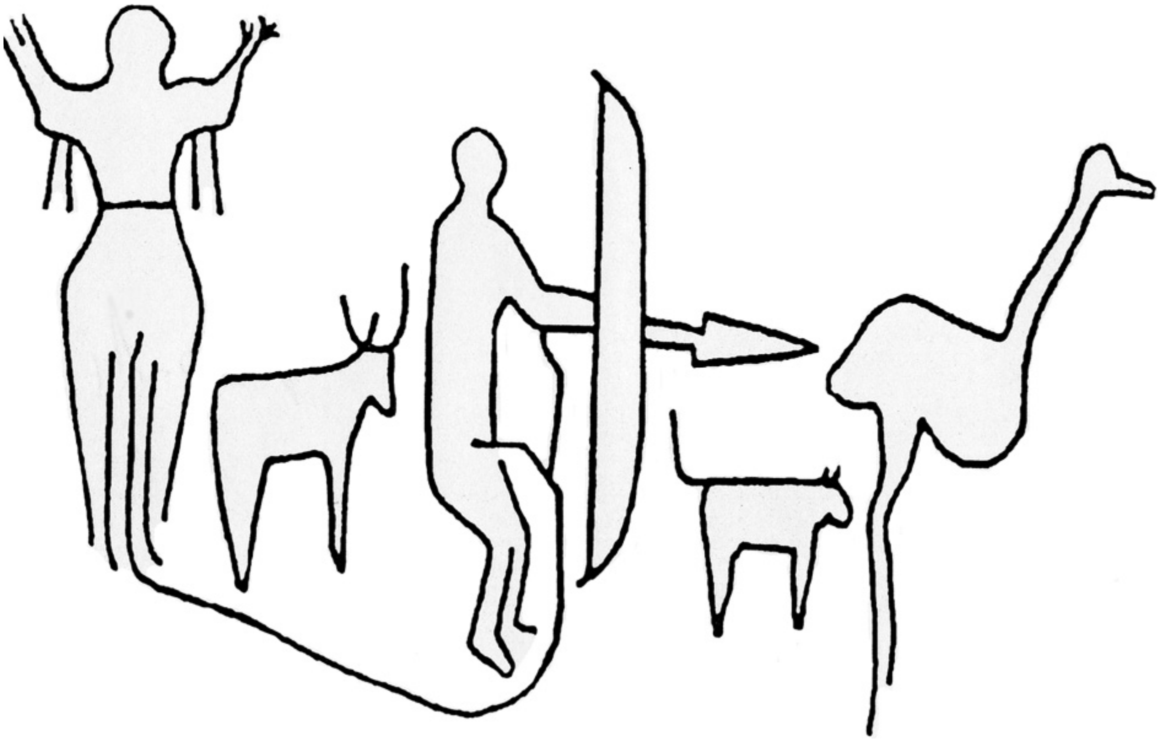

Fig. 10b: Rock engraving, Ignatievka Cave, South Ural Mountains (Russia) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after Ščelinskij, Širokov)

Palaeolithic people in Europe and West Asia also had this ethos, which emerged from the cooperation of the sexes. Therefore, the act of painting animals was a ceremony of great significance, since it brought the animals’ souls back to the womb of Mother Earth and, at the same time, asked for their return. This religious ceremony was accompanied by flute music and dance.[113] All members of the group participated: men, women, and children—as shown by fossilized footprints and painted handprints on the walls. They spatter-painted outlines of their hands on the walls as if to affirm their prayers.[114] This was about religion, not “art” in our sense, so the handprints are not pictorial signatures of the artists, as is falsely assumed. Such handprints in all sizes were found in the caves. Occasional ←78 | 79→missing finger joints there do not indicate “mutilations,” but were purposely bent, as if to use the extended fingers to represent numbers that were also symbolic values and at the same time prayer gestures to Mother Earth.

This by no means hints at the existence of male secret societies with special “initiation rites,” as the idea of men’s “hunting magic” would suggest. Instead, all members of a given community were always present, and the children grew naturally into this worldview. These ceremonies surely included dances in animal masks, as documented in the caves by the so-called animal-human “composite figures.”[115] The dances referred to and intensively addressed female animal ancestors. Male and female shamans carried out these dances, as shown in the drawings of male and female “composite figures.” Shamanic trances were part of all early religions and do not represent any special “shamanism.” This is how humans from all early historical epochs used to communicate with natural phenomena and with human and animal ancestors. In this, women had a special significance due to their connection with birth, death, and rebirth.[116]

In all this we see the complexity of Palaeolithic religion. To call it “hunting magic” and a “fertility cult” is a complete misinterpretation, because magic or a cult does not make a religion. Likewise, the labels “ancestor cult” and “shamanism” do not do it justice. These interpretive attempts address only isolated phenomena and deny Palaeolithic people the capacity to develop a fully formed religion. Yet all aspects of Palaeolithic religiosity can be understood within the context of a rebirth religion and can easily be integrated into a meaningful whole.

Abstract Signs and the Calendar

The occurrence of abstract signs in the caves has also been noted. These can be seen everywhere among the animal images; sometimes they appear as long dotted lines and rectangular net signs, also without images.[117] But most observers see them as “incomprehensible signs,” an attitude that, naturally, does not motivate anyone to decipher them. But these are the continuation, throughout the Upper Palaeolithic, of what we

←79 | 80→

already knew about the Middle Palaeolithic: the oldest pictorial writing, consisting of lines, dots, nets, abstract vulvas, and other significant symbolic codes.

New here is the fact that this pictorial writing now often appears in conjunction with animal images, which has allowed for some interesting conclusions, for these “captioned” animal images enable an expanded interpretation based on the numeric symbolism of the signs. With their help, a calendar-based interpretation has been suggested that can claim some plausibility.[118]

We give merely a few examples here out of this rich interpretation:

Painted directly in front of the head of the first large bull on the left wall in the “Great Hall” in the Lascaux Cave is an abstract sign; it consists of three clear vertical lines, supplemented by short lines, three on the right and three on the left (Fig. 11). Since the Middle Palaeolithic, the number three is related to the temporal sequence of the three visible moon phases. It appears here expanded to the number nine, which is important for counting out the lunar month. The bull image gains additional meaning in its connection to the moon as a time reference. This is not by chance, nor is it a unique case. We see this in the bull images with “turned” horns, so that even though the animal is seen from the side, the horns remain in frontal view, for example, in the scratch drawing of the Cave of La Mouthe (Dordogne) (Fig. 12). From this perspective, the two horns represent the waxing and waning crescent and link the bull image symbolically to the moon. There are many such examples, so that general validity must be assumed. As a consequence, the bull images can not only be understood as naturalistic but become symbolic in themselves, as symbols of calendar time. In their significance as “moon bull” or “celestial bull,” they appear on the ceilings of Palaeolithic caves, at first, but from then on, this symbolism has a very long cultural history.[119]

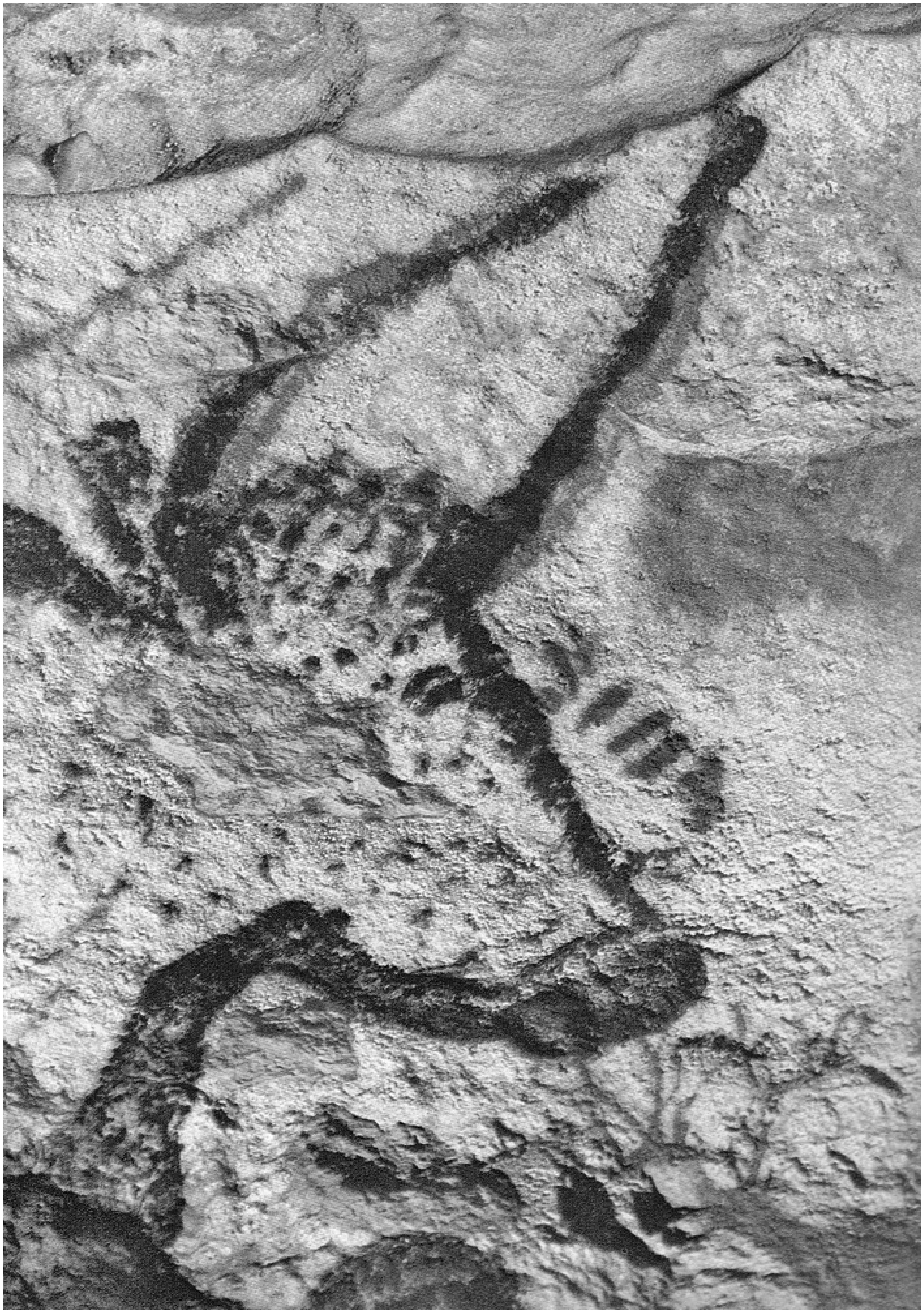

Fig. 11: Head of a bull combined with abstract signs, Great Hall of the Lascaux Cave (France)

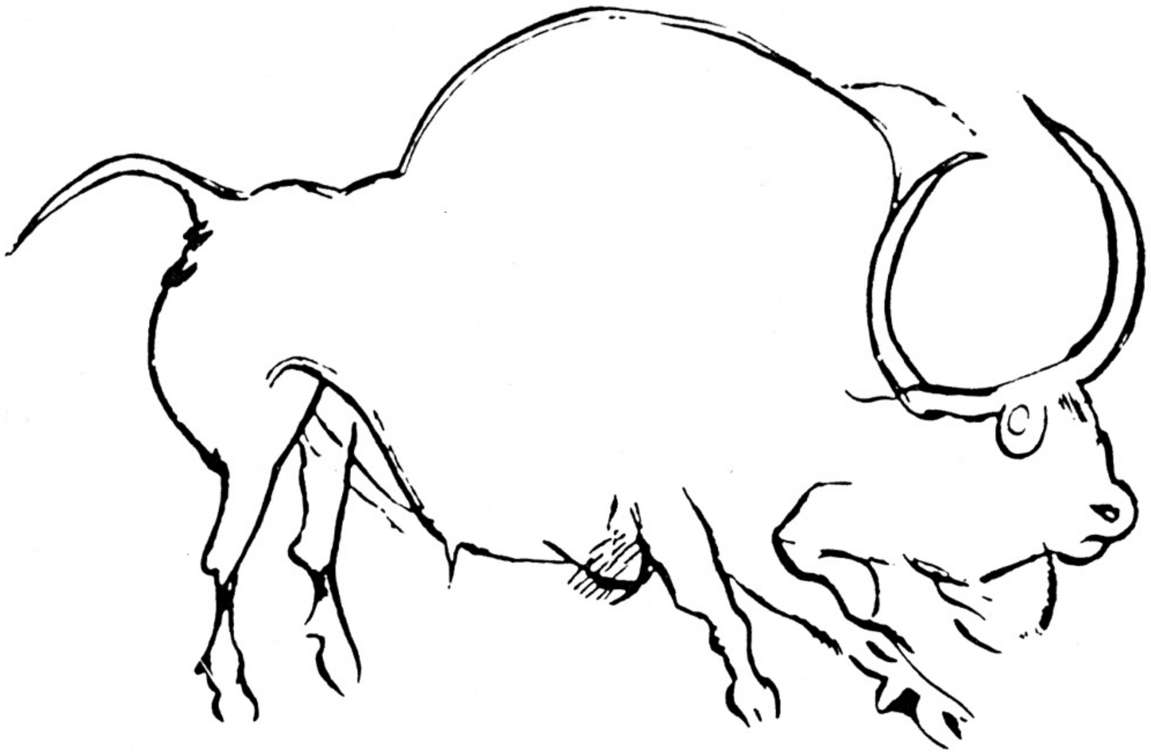

Fig. 12: Image of a bull with “turned” horns in the shape of crescents, Upper Palaeolithic, Magdalénien (France)

←80 | 81→This does not mean, however, that all the bisons in cave paintings are bulls, as was long claimed; there are also cows. In the Lascaux Cave, for example, cows are well represented and, in contrast to the monumental, heavy, and often stiff bulls, they appear quite lively.[120] They stretch their necks forward and downward, make daring leaps over other animals, three put their heads together, and their delicate horns are made to look just as supple as their legs. Only one pregnant black cow is broad and heavy, but it has a unique feature: it is standing with its hind legs on two large quadrangles, each divided into nine squares, and a third ←81 | 82→such quadrangle is placed directly behind it (Fig. 13). The squares of the three quadrangles are colored yellow, red, and black. These unusual signs are regarded as “heraldic arms”—an inept attribution that serves only to make them “incomprehensible.” The moon symbolism is especially clear here: it is represented not only in the trinity of signs, but also in the three colors used to paint them, which were probably considered “moon colors.” Just as noteworthy is the consistent number of nine squares in each sign. Together the squares are the sum of three times nine, or a lunar month. These signs therefore represent the complete lunar calendar and also the nine lunar months of pregnancy, indicated by the cow’s condition. This shows it to be a “moon cow,” and by means of this connection with the lunar calendar, its significance is enhanced beyond that of the bulls. This is an age-old depiction of the “celestial cow,” which is still found in the myths of much later cultural epochs—as the Egyptian goddesses Nout and Hathor attest.

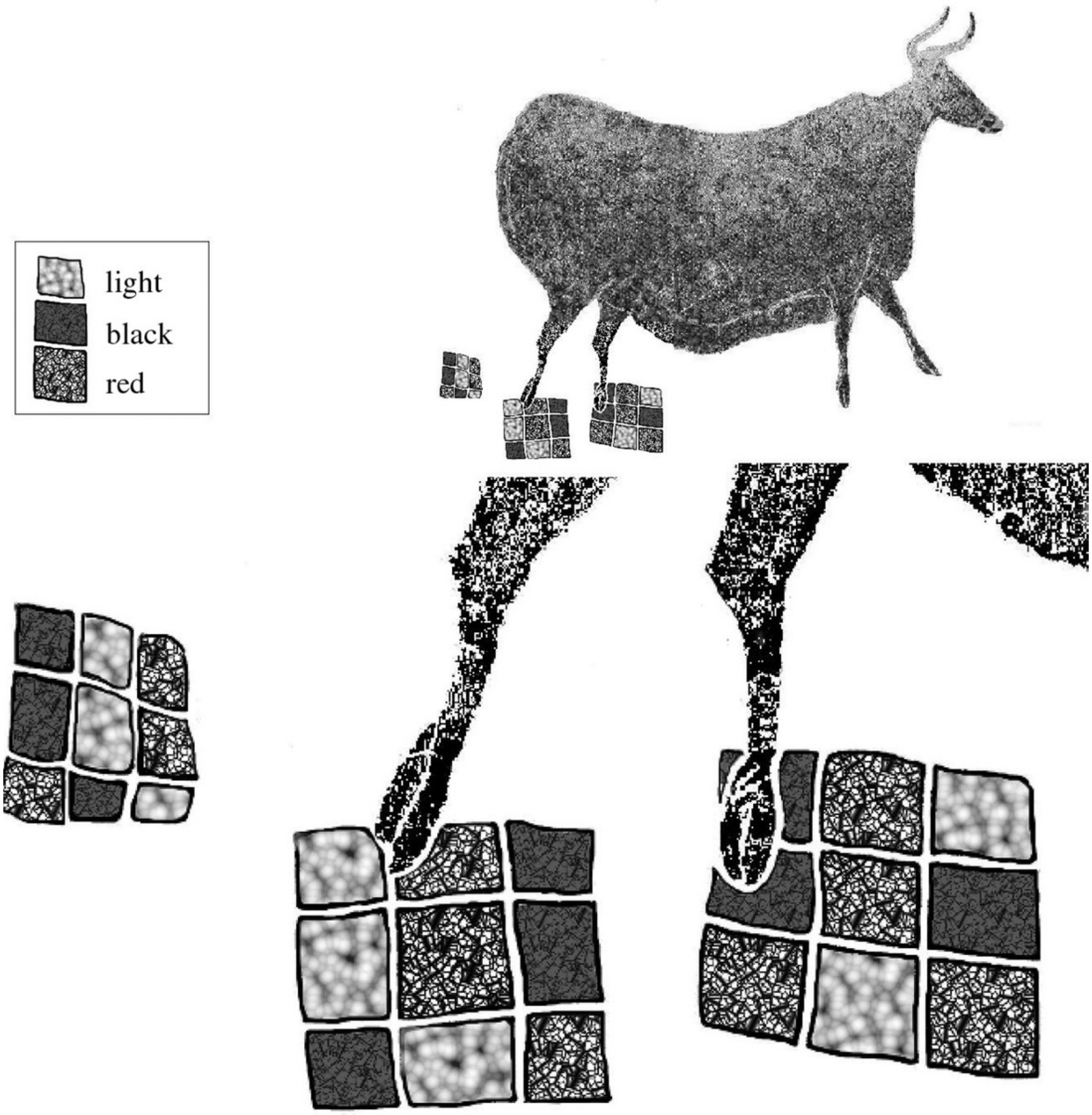

Fig. 13: Three quadrangles, each with nine squares, under and behind the legs of a pregnant cow, Lascaux Cave (France) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after Georges Bataille)

This calendar-based meaning derived from the moon is also represented in another grouping: the already mentioned relief of three female figures in different stages of pregnancy. This trinity presents a temporal sequence directly relating women to the moon. The three female bodies stand above the image of a bull or cow, clearly establishing the symbolic connections between moon—woman—bull/cow (see Fig. 6).

This calendar-based interpretation was further expanded by the integration of numerous horse depictions. Unlike the bull or cow images, the horses are not intended to represent lunar cycles, but instead are linked to the sun. Instead of horns, horses have a mane that radiates at full gallop like the rays of the sun. It has been noted that the many small, colorful horses, such as the ones in the Lascaux Cave, are all drawn in rapid motion, though their form remains completely constant. They are therefore as immutable as the sun, in contrast to the moon. They complete the lunar calendar with the days that come between the nights, and their greater or smaller size reflects when the days are longer or shorter. In this way, the cave's ceiling with its paintings can be understood symbolically as the heavens, where the moon and sun move according to their rhythms.[121]

This calendar-based interpretation of animal images fits seamlessly into the rebirth religion. As understood by Palaeolithic people, the processes of growth, death, and rebirth occur not only on earth, but also in the heavens: the moon makes this plain with its cycles, and the sun reveals this as its arc becomes higher in summer and lower in winter. Since the heavenly bodies move, it was a natural ←82 | 83→step for Palaeolithic people to represent them symbolically using the theme of moving animals. Thus far, we can see that a calendar-based interpretation of the cave paintings makes an important contribution to our understanding of the wealth of ideas in Palaeolithic religiosity. The fullness of religious meaning was surely transmitted orally in stories and myths, but these were not passed on and preserved.

It remains an open question as to why, in spite of the great economic importance of women's gathering activities and their preparation of plants for food and medicine, plant motifs do not appear in the cave paintings. This absence has less to do with the Palaeolithic people than with the one-sided perspective of traditional research, which was held in thrall by the animals in the dubious context of "hunting magic."

←83 | 84→Plant motifs do occur, though not often. There are two types: ascending and descending plant motifs. In ascending plant motifs the branches point upward, as exemplified by the small plant in front of the great black bull in Lascaux (Axial Diverticulum, right wall) and, for an example with more branches, in the painted limestone of Riparo Dalmeri (Italy).[122] No leaf or blossom can be seen on the line-drawn branches, so they resemble a symbolic code more than a naturalistic representation. The plants have abstract forms and resemble signs, which gives them more meaning, not less. If we look for the meaning of the ascending plant motif, we can find it in the slender plant painted on the wall between five large bell-shaped vulvas, each colored red ("El Castillo" Cave near Santander) (Fig. 14). Vulvas signify birth, life, and rebirth, emphasized by the red: the ascending plant motif has the same meaning. It refers to the emergence of returning vegetation in spring and summer, the season of "rebirth" for plants.

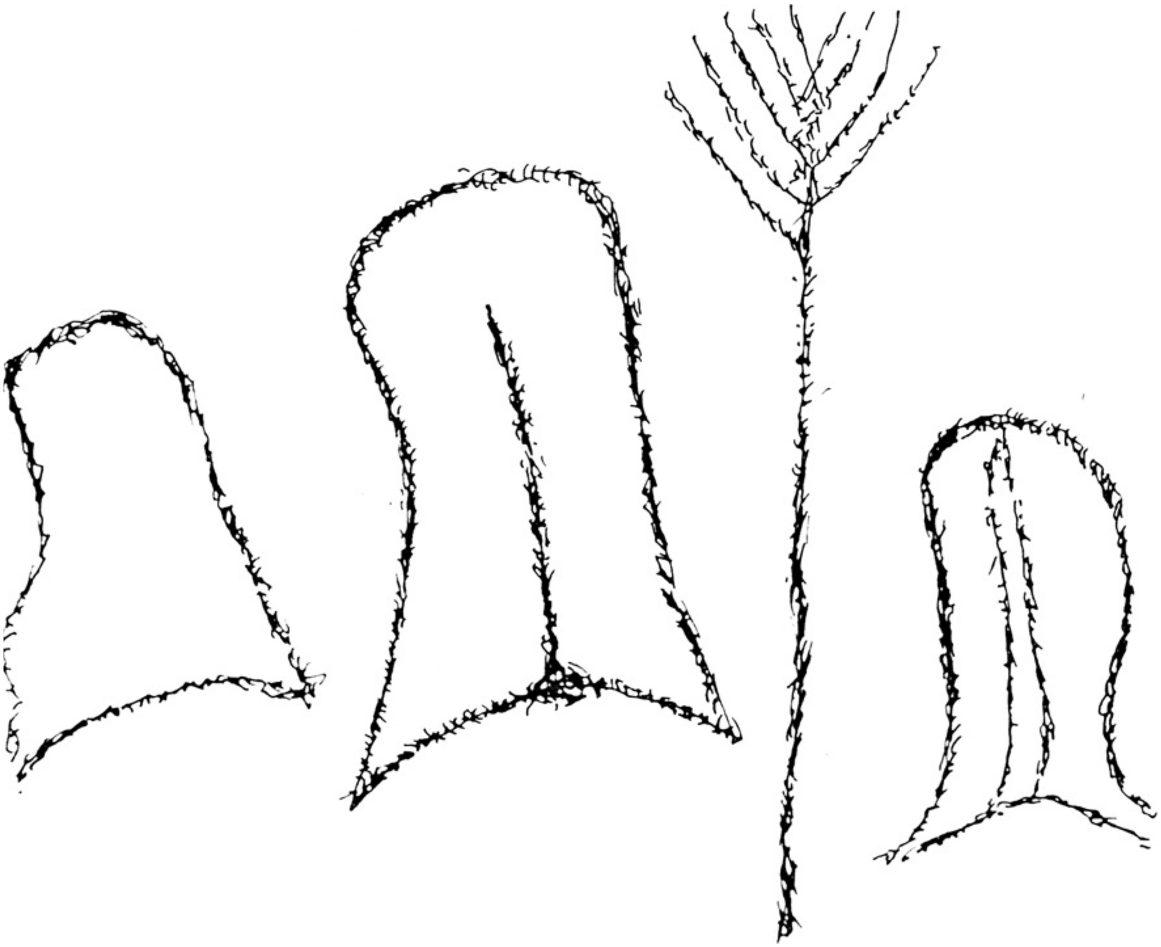

Fig. 14: Three out of five vulva signs combined with a plant motif, “El Castillo” Cave (Spain)

Descending plant motifs are harder to find because their pictorial representation has been misinterpreted. The small branches point downward, which signifies decline and death, that is the death of vegetation in fall and winter. These signs have been labeled “fishbone patterns” or “harpoons,” which is completely misleading, because, if fishing occurred at all in the Upper Neolithic period, it was highly insignificant.[123] This so-called “fishbone pattern” can be found painted on the walls of caves and scratched onto bone and stone objects, so we know it was important. This pattern also occurs in multiple iterations, which indicates its rich meaning: for example, in a cave in the cliffs of Nanteau (France) there are two “fishbone patterns” next to each other pointing downward, signifying dying vegetation (Fig. 15, column 1–4). But if one looks more closely, one can also see two “fishbone patterns” pointing upward, signifying emerging vegetation in spring (Fig. 15, column 2–5).[124] Together, these patterns represent the emergence and decline of the plant world, which similarly passes through the cycle of life, death, and return. The degree of abstraction clearly shows that the plant motifs also belong to a pictorial writing expressing the worldview of Palaeolithic people.

←84 | 85→

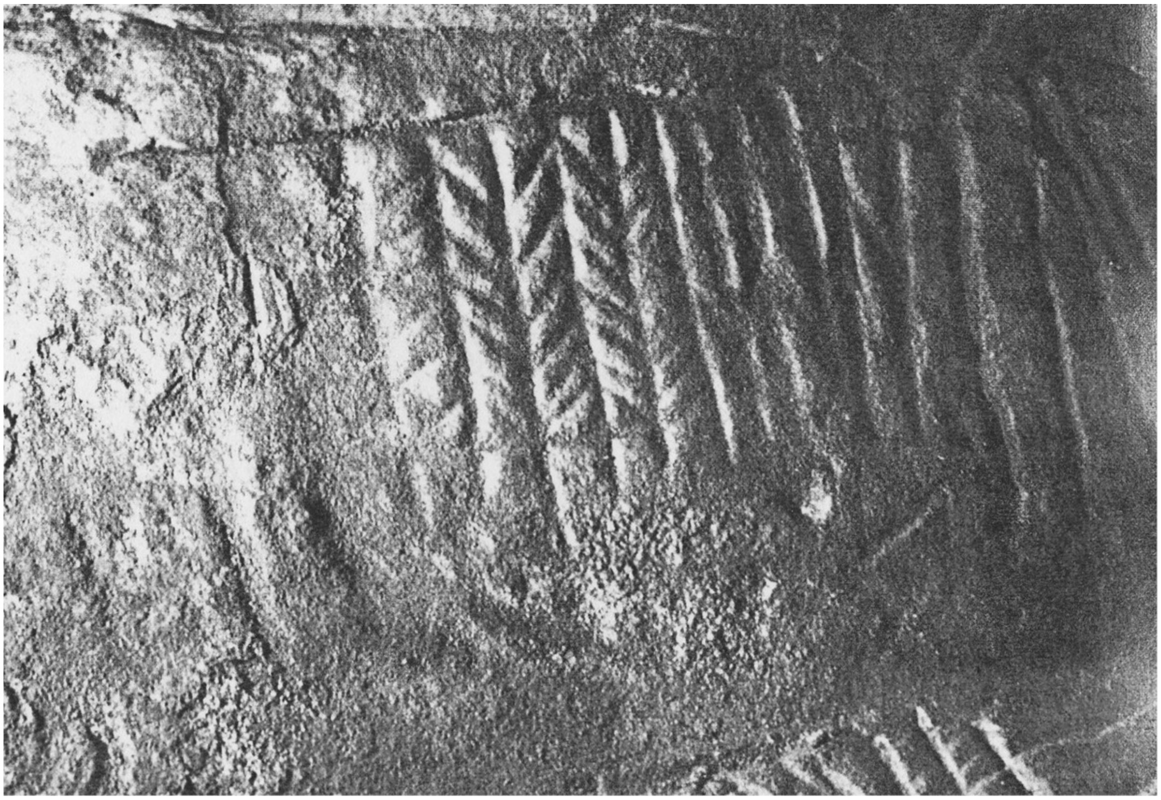

Fig. 15: Ascending and descending plant motifs, cave in the mountains of Nanteau (France)

←85 | 86→

For them, the Great Mother and giver of rebirth was the Earth. Not only the plant world emerges again and again from her womb, but also the animal world and humanity—as the symbolic function of the caves indicates. This thought was also transferred to celestial bodies because, to the observing eye, their appearance on the eastern horizon resembled “birth” from the earth, and their disappearance on the western horizon was like a sinking and “dying” into the earth. In the Underworld, in “death,” they followed an arc returning from west to east.[125] To guarantee their “rebirth,” they were also referenced and painted into the caves, the womb of Mother Earth, symbolized by the animals. This thought confirms the interpretation that animals were, at the same time, symbols for celestial bodies, and this was easily integrated into the overall religion of rebirth.

In all of this we acknowledge the complex worldview held by Palaeolithic women and men, which up to now has not been given the attention it deserves. At the same time it reveals that, due to the theme of rebirth, religion in the Palaeolithic Era was woman-centered, to be precise: mother-centered. It revolved around the Earth as the Great Mother who brings forth everything, and each woman was seen as made in her image.

Finally, let us summarize the results of this chapter.

- Palaeolithic society, throughout its long existence, was *fundamentally egalitarian* and, with regard to the activities of women and men, this was an *overlapping equality*.[126]
- At the economic level, it developed an *economy of gathering and hunting*, and at the social level, an *age-class society* that lacked genealogy, but with great respect for motherhood.
- At the cultural and religious level, Palaeolthic society practiced a comprehensive *rebirth religion* in which the central principle was to honor the *Earth as the Primordial Mother and woman in her image*. This reverence cluster round the mystery of life’s recurrence in plants, animals and humans, and also in the moon and sun and all the stars.

←86 | 87→

Definition

Given the above-mentioned characteristics, we call Palaeolithic society *mother-centered*, not due to motherhood as such, but because of its *rebirth religion*. Mother-centeredness does not negate the society’s *fundamental equality*, since despite reverence for the maternal principle, women and men both participated in developing this societal form, albeit with a different focus.

A clarificatory note: We do not call Palaeolithic society “matriarchal” because matriarchal societies display other social patterns, such as large kinship groups based on female genealogy. Although different from “matriarchal,” the term “mother-centered” is not used here in any reductive way. Both terms describe different forms of culture with women at the center but not at the "top" of any kind of hierarchy. These early cultures were free from potentates and hierarchies.

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1 Chris Scarre (ed.): *Past Worlds. The Times Atlas of Archaeology*, Cambridge 1988, Times Books. Paul G. Bahn: *Atlas of World Archaeology*, New York 2000, Checkmark Books.

2 Despite decades of language criticism, most archaeologists still speak of "man." "Man," we read, hunted and gathered, used tools, and built camps. If one needs to consider whether perhaps "man," or "he," also sewed clothing, prepared food, and gave birth to children, then it becomes very clear that this term is not neutral at all, but only refers to men.

3 Scarre, 54–55.

4 Op. cit., 12 and 56–57.

5 Op. cit., 62.

6 Siegmar von Schnurbein: *Atlas der Vorgeschichte*, 12–15. It should be noted here that recent finds have pushed back the dates for the Palaeolithic Age epochs considerably, as is seen in this Atlas from 2009.

7 Scarre, 60–61. The forested areas of South and East Asia are not yet well researched.

8 Op. cit., 60–62.

9 Op. cit., 64–67. Schnurbein, 17.

10 The commonly used concept of "modern" refers here to the anatomy of these early humans, but not their culture. A conventional designation was "Cro-Magnon humans."

11 Scarre, 66–67. Friedemann Schrenk: "Vom aufrechten Gang zur Kunst," in: *Eiszeit. Kunst und Kultur*, Archäologisches Landesmuseum Konstanz, Stuttgart-Ostfildern 2009, Thorbecke Verlag, see drawings, 54, 59. For the dating of Florisbad see Hermann Parzinger: *Die Kinder des Prometheus. Eine Geschichte der Menschheit vor der Erfindung der Schrift*, Munich 2015 (2.), Beck Verlag, 57.

12 Schnurbein, 25.

13 There have been very recent finds of Palaeolithic handaxes on Crete and Cyprus indicating that humans reached the islands 130,000 years ago or even earlier. They presumably came from Libya or Asia Minor by sea, using rafts and dugout canoes. See Thomas F. Strasser and Curtis Runnels: "A possible Paleolithic handaxe from Cyprus," *Antiquity Project Gallery*, No. 350, 2016.

14 Scarre, 68–69.

15 Ibid.

16 Dugout boats prove to be very suitable, as the ethnology of the Trobriand people of the Melanesian Trobriand Islands has shown, who sail the ocean for thousands of nautical miles on large seagoing outrigger dugout canoes. Bronislaw Malinowski: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, New York 1923, Paul R. Reynolds.

17 Scarre, 70–71.

18 This was determined by analysis of the bones and the strong set of teeth.

19 Scarre, 56–57.

20 Ibid.

21 Sally Slocum: "Woman the Gatherer," in: *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter, New York-London 1975, Monthly Review Press, 36–50; see especially 45–46. Nancy Tanner and Adrienne Zihlmann: "Women in Evolution. Part I: Innovation and

Selection in Human Origins," in: *Signs* 1, No. 3, Spring 1976, 585–608. Nancy M. Tanner: *On Becoming Human*, Cambridge UK 1981, Cambridge University Press.

22 Scarre, 56–67.

23 Linda R. Owen, in: *Eiszeit*, 161.

24 Three perfectly-made throwing spears were found in Schoeningen, Germany, 300,000–270,000 years old; see Schnurbein, 16. Hannes Napierala and Hans-Peter Uerpmann, in: *Eiszeit*, 186.

25 Scarre, 62–63.

26 Op. cit., 64. Napierala and Uerpmann, 186.

27 Schnurbein, 36. Ulrich Stodiek, in: *Eiszeit*, S. 192–199; Napierala and Uerpmann: Op. cit. See also illustration, 186.

28 For West Asia see Seton Lloyd: *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia from the Old Stone Age to the Persian Conquest*, London 1978, Thames and Hudson, 22–26.

29 Simone Riehl and Linda R. Owen, in: *Eiszeit*, 200–203.

30 Sally Slocum, 47.

31 Linda Owen, S. 161, Harald Floss, in: *Eiszeit*, 161, 204.

32 For example, Tibetan women, Mosuo women, and others, in Robert Briffault: *The Mothers. A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions*, 3 Vols., New York 1996, Johnson Reprint Corporation, first edition: 1927.

33 Sybille Kaestner: *Jagende Sammlerinnen und sammelnde Jägerinnen. Wie australische Aborigenes-Frauen Tiere erbeuten*, Berlin-Muenster 2012, LIT. Hettie Jo Brumbach and Robert Jarvenpa: "Gender Dynamics in Hunter-Gatherer Society: Archaeological Methods and Perspectives," in: *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology*, ed. Sarah Milledge Nelson, Lanham, MD 2006, Rowen/Alta Mira.

34 The Lapland Sami women are still known to do this, as are the indigenous women of the Andaman Islands, see Richard Fester: "Das Protokoll der Sprache," in: *Weib und Macht. Fünf Millionen Jahre Urgeschichte der Frau*, eds. Richard Fester et al., Frankfurt/Main 1979, Fischer Verlag, 96.

35 Scarre, 56, 62.

36 For example, the peoples of Mongolia and Tibet, and likewise, the Tuareg women in the Sahara.

37 For example, the Ainu in northern Japan and the Mosuo in southwestern China near Tibet, in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 5 and 7, and Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchat in Südchina*.

38 Rudolf Walter, in: *Eiszeit*, 176–179. For dating, see 176

39 See, for example, the burial site in Sunghir (Russia) ca. 24,000, in: *Eiszeit*, Illustration on 171, 178.

40 Scarre, 56, 62.

41 For example, in Mezhirich and Mezin (Ukraine) and other places. See Scarre, 73. Furthermore, supposedly there were already large longhouses in the Palaeolithic at the river Don in southern Russia (Kostenki I), though some have doubted this hypothesis. Critics ask where, in the ice age, could wood have been found for structures 20m in length; they assume that it is a misinterpretation of the site. See Claus-Joachim Kind: "Gruben und Steinkreise," in: *Eiszeit*, 220–221.

42 See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 16. Also the sources referenced there.

43 Personal communication with the Kabyle/Berber woman Makilam. For the many other linguistic correspondences between "woman" and "house," see the palaeolinguist Fester,

100.

44 Scarre, 73.

45 Schnurbein, 36–37. Harald Floss, 181.

46 Schnurbein, 45, 49f.

47 Harald Floss, 180–182.

48 Malinowski: *Argonauts*.

49 See Sigmund Freud's theory of the "primal horde."

50 Compare Patricia Draper: "!Kung Women," in: *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter, New York-London 1975, Monthly Review Press, 77–109. The designation "San," or "KhoiSan," which means "humans," as opposed to the denigrating colonialist name "Bushmen," is correct and generally accepted today.

51 Group size of 20 to at most 100 individuals is estimated based on the size of the camps. See Parzinger, 73.

52 Hermann Mueller-Karpe: *Grundzüge früher Menschheitsgeschichte, Bd I*, Darmstadt 1998, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 66.

53 This refers to a Palaeolithic campsite in Mal'ta near Lake Baikal in Siberia. See André Leroi-Gourhan: *Les religions de la Préhistoire (Paléolithique)*, Paris 1964, Presses Universitaires de France. The female figurines in the women's sections of the tents are a clear indication that the women produced them.

54 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchat in Südchina*.

55 See for example, Scarre, 73.

56 Slocum, 45–46.

57 Bronislaw Malinowski: *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, New York 1926, Paul R. Reynolds. J. F. Rock: *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, 2 Vols., Cambridge, MA 1947, Harvard University Press. The fact that biological fatherhood was unknown to these and other matriarchal peoples has nothing to do with their lack of cognitive capability, but with their spiritual view of pregnancy and birth. For them, our view of biological fatherhood would have been sacrilege. Their kinship concept of "father" was different, as this role was held by the mother's brother. According to matrilineality, he was the one who shared in the care for his sister's children ("social fatherhood").

58 Such rituals of gathering ancestor's souls generally existed in Europe as well. See Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie*, Stuttgart 2014, Kohlhammer Verlag.

59 As an example, see George P. Murdock: *Our Primitive Contemporaries*, New York 1934, Macmillan. P. Murdock: *Ethnographic Atlas: A Summary*, New York 1967, Macmillan.

60 Compare the critique of the notion of universal male dominance in Sanday: *Female Power and Male Dominance*.

61 Regarding this, see the example of!Kung San settlement in Patricia Draper, 95–109.

62 On this subject, see the critique in: Op. cit., Chapter 1.

63 The scientific collective term "San" (formerly: "Bushmen") refers to various groups of people in Namibia, Angola, Botswana and South Africa with a different kind of economy and way of life. Some still speak their original Khoe language ("Khoe-San"), but some have lost it (the!Kung). Related to them, albeit of taller stature, are the cattle-breeding, Khoe-speaking Khoekhoe in Namibia and South Africa. They were pushed back by the colonizing Dutch, who disparagingly called the Khoekhoe "Hottentots."

See Alan Barnard: *Anthropology and the Bushman*, Oxford 2007, Berg; in: https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-270777

64 Colin Turnbull: “The Pygmies in the Congo Basin,” in: *Peoples of the Earth*, Vol. 2, ed. Tom Stacey, London 1972, Tom Stacey Ltd.

65 See for this and the following: J. P. Haarhoff: “The Bushmen in southern Africa,” in: *Peoples of the Earth*, Vol. 2, ed. Tom Stacey, London 1972, Tom Stacey Ltd. In order to understand the traditional way of life of the San, as well as other aboriginal peoples, older ethnological studies are the most interesting as they were able to describe much that has been lost in the meantime.

66 Op. cit., 241f. The assertions here that the San live in “monogamous families” and believe in a “creator god” are pure fiction, typical bourgeois-Christian projections.

67 Draper, 104–106.

68 Turnbull, 98–104.

69 This interesting “grandmother hypothesis” is new, since scholars previously believed that a woman with small children had to turn to a man as “provider.” Now, for the first time, palaeoanthropological research is paying attention to groups of women who share the care and nurturing of children. See J. F. O’Connell, K. Hawkes and N. G. Blurton Jones: “Grandmothering and the Evolution of Homo Erectus,” in: *Journal of Human Evolution*, No. 36, 1999, 461–485. Also see Kit Poie and Camilla Power: “Grandmothering and Female Coalitions. A Basis for Matrilineal Priority?” in: *Early Human Kinship*. *From Sex to Social Reproduction*, eds. Allen Nicholas et al., Malden, MA-Oxford 2011, Wiley-Blackwell, 168–186.

70 There is a tradition among ethnologists to claim that the father line and patrilocality were established from the beginning, or quasi eternal. This relates to an ideological rejection of possible free female partner choice and shared motherhood. This is connected with a rejection of evolution from an early mother line to a later father line. The ideological basis for this view was thoroughly criticized by Chris Knight: “Early Human Kinship was Matrilineal,” in: *Early Human Kinship, From Sex to Social Reproduction*, eds. Allen Nicholas et al., Malden, MA-Oxford 2011, Wiley-Blackwell, 61–82.

71 Claude Meillassoux: *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*, Cambridge 1991, Cambridge University Press (original Paris 1975). Meillassoux combines this depiction of the earliest, egalitarian societies with a perceptive critique of the relationship theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss, according to whom all societies are based on filiation (genealogy), including the patriarchal pattern of “woman exchange.” That is, for Lévi-Strauss there are only patriarchal societies that make women into objects to be exchanged among men–a great error! Meillassoux, on the other hand, shows that there are other relationship forms without filiation (in either male or female lines), namely the symbolic relationship in age-class societies, where people see class relationships as the real relationship. He points to the important fact that, in anthropology, rules for partner choice are often mistaken as filiation rules (genealogy). The former designate possible sexual partners, the latter the individual’s connection to the generations; only filiation leads to blood ties in our sense. Foraging societies have rules of partner choice, and clan societies have filiation rules. Thus the appearance of one or the other set of rules is defining for different societal forms.

72 Op. cit., 21–25. For a critique of the concept and idea of incest, see Herbert Maisch: *Incest*, London 1973, Deutsch Verlag.

73 It has also been claimed that these societies are matrilineal, patrilineal, or bilineal, indicating much uncertainty about their genealogy. It must be noted that they were subject to long-term colonial pressure: groups of San were forced into a sedentary life and exposed to Christianization, which led to changes in their societal forms (see Patricia Draper). So it makes a difference which groups ethnologists study. The common confusion between rules of partner choice and filiation rules identified by Meillassoux must also be taken into account, since Western ethnologists have difficulty conceptualizing relationships without genealogy.

74 Schrenk, in: *Eiszeit*, 58. Remains of a Neanderthal woman with a well-preserved hyoid bone were found in Palestine/Israel, indicating the ability to speak. See alsoYoel Rak: "Konnte der Neandertaler sprechen?" in: *Bild der Wissenschaft*, No. 3, 1999.

75 This theory was first criticized by Doris F. Jonas and A. David Jonas: *Das erste Wort. Wie die Menschen sprechen lernten*, Berlin-Wien 1982, Ullstein.

76 Op. cit.; see also Roger Lewin and Richard E. Leakey: *Origins: What New Discoveries Reveal About The Emergence Of Our Species And Its Possible Future*, London 1977, Macdonald & J. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy: *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*, Cambridge, MA 2009, Harvard University Press. See for the origins of culture, based on female solidarity, Chris Knight: *Blood Relations. Menstruation and the Origins of Culture*, New Haven, London 1991, Yale University Press.

77 See Fester, 79–106. In addition, series of studies have proved that women in general have higher language abilities than men.

78 Scarre, 64–65. Schrenk, in: *Eiszeit*, 58.

79 Ibid. See also Schnurbein, 21. Leroi-Gourhan, 66–67.

80 Since Neanderthal people also lived in areas with no caves, burials in open land also exist, but are less well preserved.

81 Leroi-Gourhan, 76–78.

82 Op. cit., 79–83, especially the illustrations.

83 Examples are the small figures from Tan-Tan (Morocco, Wadi Draa) and from Berekhat Ram (Palestine, Golan Heights); www.visual-arts-cork.com and www.utexas.edu/courses/classicalarch/readings/Berekhat_Ram.pdf

84 Examples are the primordial goddess Nout of Egypt and other sky goddesses, and likewise the goddess Earth in many religions; in pre-patriarchal Greece, the same was true of the primordial goddess Eurynome and of Hera, the mother of all deities. See Robert Graves: *The Greek Myths*, New York 1955, Penguin Books.

85 The Trobriand Islanders, for example. See Malinowski: *Sexual Life of Savages*. The same has been reported about Berber women. See Makilam: *The Magical Life of Berber Women in Kabylia*, New York 2007, Peter Lang.

86 Leroi-Gourhan, 49–56.

87 Crossed lines were found as a drawing on a polished Nummulites perforatus, 2 cm in diameter (Tata Travertine Complex, Hungary); see also László Vértes: *Tata. Eine mittelpaläolithische Travertin-Siedlung in Ungarn*, Budapest 1964, Akadémiai Kiadó.

88 Marie Koenig: *Am Anfang der Kultur*, 31–44, 75–128.

89 Op. cit., 146–159.

90 Marie E.P. Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter. Höhlenkult Alteuropas*, Zürich 1980, Buchclub Ex Libris, 37–42, 95, 173. Scarre, 74.

91 Koenig: *Am Anfang der Kultur.*

92 The Neanderthals died out in the Upper Palaeolithic. The hypothesis of their extinction by modern humans has been increasingly criticized, since it assumes "war" between these

two human types, of which there is no proof. In many areas, both lived for a long time in close proximity, for ex. in West Asia (Caves of Yabrud, Syria); in other regions, one human type succeeded the other. A new hypothesis suggests that a sudden new cold period, caused by the eruption of a mega-volcano (near Italy), could have contributed to their downfall in Europe, while modern humans were still living in warmer zones. Geneticists have established that Neanderthal groups merged into modern human groups, as in the Middle East, where they lived in the same areas 50,000–60,000 years ago, as well as in Europe and Asia. This was reported in *The Guardian, Science*, January 28, 2015. See a summary in Parzinger, 52–53.

93 Scarre, 74. Leroi-Gourhan, 94.

94 Floss, in: *Eiszeit*, 248–257. Nicholas J. Conard, in: *Eiszeit*, 268–271. The female figure of Hohle Fels is around 5000 years older than the famous Venus of Willendorf (Austria).

95 As opposed to the many vulva images throughout the Palaeolithic Era and later epochs, phallus representations are very rare. The few phallus-like objects are usually tools. But interpretations of these were wildly exaggerated; they were seen in connection with "sexual magic." However, they could not have been used for rituals, because in that case phallus and vulva representations would have had to be similarly widespread.

96 Gerhard Bosinski, in: *Eiszeit*, 277. Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter*, 205.

97 Time was counted from the first missed menstruation to the birth, since the moment of conception was unknown.

98 The South and North American indigenous peoples provide examples, See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.

99 Starr Goode: *Sheela na gig: The Dark Goddess of Sacred Power*, Rochester, VT 2016, Inner Traditions.

100 Miriam Robbins Dexter and Victor H. Mair: *Sacred Display*, Amherst, NY 2010, Cambria Press.

101 Haarmann: *Writing as technology*, German edition: *Geschichte der Schrift*, 23. Haarmann points out the wealth of Palaeolithic abstract symbols and confirms that Homo Sapiens had the capacity from the beginning to write abstract signs with meanings.

102 Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter*, 113–116. Likewise, Marthe Chollot-Varagnac, *Les Origines du Graphisme Symbolique*, Paris 1980, Ėdition de la Fondation Singer-Polignac. In this context the Tifinagh script of the Tuareg people should be mentioned. It consists only of dots and lines, exactly like the ones in archaic rock drawings in the Sahara Desert. This is an age-old script and is written with a finger in the sand; it belongs solely to the cultural repertoire of women, who pass it along the maternal line. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 18 and references.

103 A few of the most famous cave sanctuaries are: Niaux and Tuc d'Audoubert in the Pyrenees, Altamira, Ekain and Tito Bustillo in northern Spain, Grotte de Chauvet, Les Combarelles and especially Lascaux in central France.

104 Jordi Serangeli, in: *Eiszeit*, 247.

105 Op. cit., 244, 247. Two exceptions are shown here, at which wild predators show their teeth and claws.

106 Examples of such animal burials or "cult depositions" are: two reindeer, Stellmoor and Meiendorf, near Hamburg, and a complete mammoth skeleton on a red-colored site, Mauern in Bavaria (both Germany); stacked deer skulls, Achenheim, Alsace (France); mammoth bones with female ivory figure, Jelisejeviči (Ukraine); reindeer skeletons, Mal'ta (Siberia); thousands of bison bones, Amvrosievskaia (near the Sea of Asov, Russia). See Mueller-Karpe, 20–21.

107 The fact that mammoths still were depicted on cave walls after they had been eradicated supports this interpretation. This does not reflect a “rigid artistic canon,” but the religious wish that these animals might be reborn from Mother Earth and return again.

108 A few examples are: the bull pierced by a spear in the “Shaft” of Lascaux Cave; the bulls hit by arrows, Gabillou Cave (Dordogne) and Niaux Cave (Pyrenees); the horse with two arrows and the vertically falling horse in the “Axial Diverticulum” of Lascaux Cave.

109 A few examples are: the black pregnant cow, left wall of the “Nave,” Lascaux Cave; vulvas are everywhere, for example three in the El Castillo Cave (Spain); reliefs of two reclining women in La Magdaleine-des-Albi, Tarn, and of the already mentioned female trinity in the Cave Angles-sur-l’Anglin, Vienne; a stone with superimposed positions drawn of a woman giving birth in the Cave Trois-Frères (all in France).

110 This is in the Ignatievka Cave (Russia); age of the drawings is 14,000-13,000 years.

111 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 14.6 and references listed there.

112 Op. cit., Chapter 7 and references listed there.

113 Bone flutes from the Palaeolithic Era have been found. See Conard, in: *Eiszeit*, 324–326.

114 On the handprints of men, women, and children see Bosinski, in: *Eiszeit*, 273–274. On the footprints, see Leroi-Gourhan, 153.

115 Examples would be: the “composite figure” from the Grotta di Fumane (Italy); the “shaman” with a bird face in the “Shaft” of Lascaux Cave; the “bird woman” from the Grotto of Peche Merle (France); the two bull-headed hunters and the large “composite figure” with a bird face, antlers, and beard, all three from the Cave of the Trois Frères (France). See these and others in George Bataille: *Prehistoric painting: Lascaux or the birth of art*, London 1980, Macmillan (original in French 1955), 133–136. Also relevant here, the small sculpture of the “Lion Man” from the Aurignacien, Hohlenstein-Stadel (Germany); see Kurt Wehrberger, in: *Eiszeit*, 258.

116 An especially richly decorated, Middle Stone Age grave of a woman believed to be a shaman was found in Bad Duerrenberg (Germany). See Schnurbein, 49.

117 An example without animal pictures was found in the El Castillo Cave (North Spain).

118 For this calendar-based interpretation, see Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter*, 45–112.

119 Op. cit.; here many more cultural examples are given.

120 Bataille, 79, 82.

121 Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter*, 45–112.

122 Bataille, 21. See illustration in: *Eiszeit*, 203.

123 Critics of this misinterpretation include: Alexander Marshack: *The Roots of Civilization*, New York 1972, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 219. Peter Ucko and André Rosenfeld: *Palaeolithic Cave Art*, New York 1967, McGraw-Hill, 174–195, 229. These authors already pointed out that these were plant motifs.

124 Koenig: *Unsere Vergangenheit ist älter*, 242.

125 This idea has been preserved in the mythologies of much later epochs.

126 This concept comes from Louise Lamphere: “Gender Models in the Southwest: Sociocultural Perspectives,” in: *Women and Men in the Prehispanic Southwest*, ed. Patricia L. Crown, Santa Fe 2000, School of American Research Press.

3

Neolithic in West Asia: The Invention of Agriculture and the Origin of Matriarchal Societies

Chronology of the Neolithic Era for West Asia

12,500 - 10,200 BCE:	Pre-Neolithic Epoch (Epipalaeolithic)
10,200 - 8,200 BCE:	Lower Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN A)
8,200 - 7,000 BCE:	Upper Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN B)
7,000 - 6,000 BCE:	Pottery Neolithic (Late Neolithic)
6,000 - 5,500 BCE:	Copper Stone Age (Chalcolithic)

Mesolithic: The Great Thaw

After the last cold phase of the ice ages, the great thaw began in the 13th millennium BCE. Warmth and humidity increased, and the mighty continental ice plate covering the northern regions of Europe and Asia gradually melted away. Gigantic glacial valleys formed to carry masses of water to the sea, causing a sea-level rise of 170 m and flooding the flat lowlands on the continental margins (shelf seas). Where no outlet existed, great lakes and inland seas formed, such as the Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea, and the Euxine Sea in West Asia. The former Euxine Sea later ←89 | 90→became the Black Sea.[1] Vast lakes, now vanished, formed along the Dnieper, Volga, and other rivers. In Inner Asia, the glaciers melted from mountain ranges and formed the wide Lake Balkhash and the deep Lake Baikal in their basins. The enormous global increase in surface water led to more rainfall, promoting plant growth and transforming the great northern tundra zones into forests.

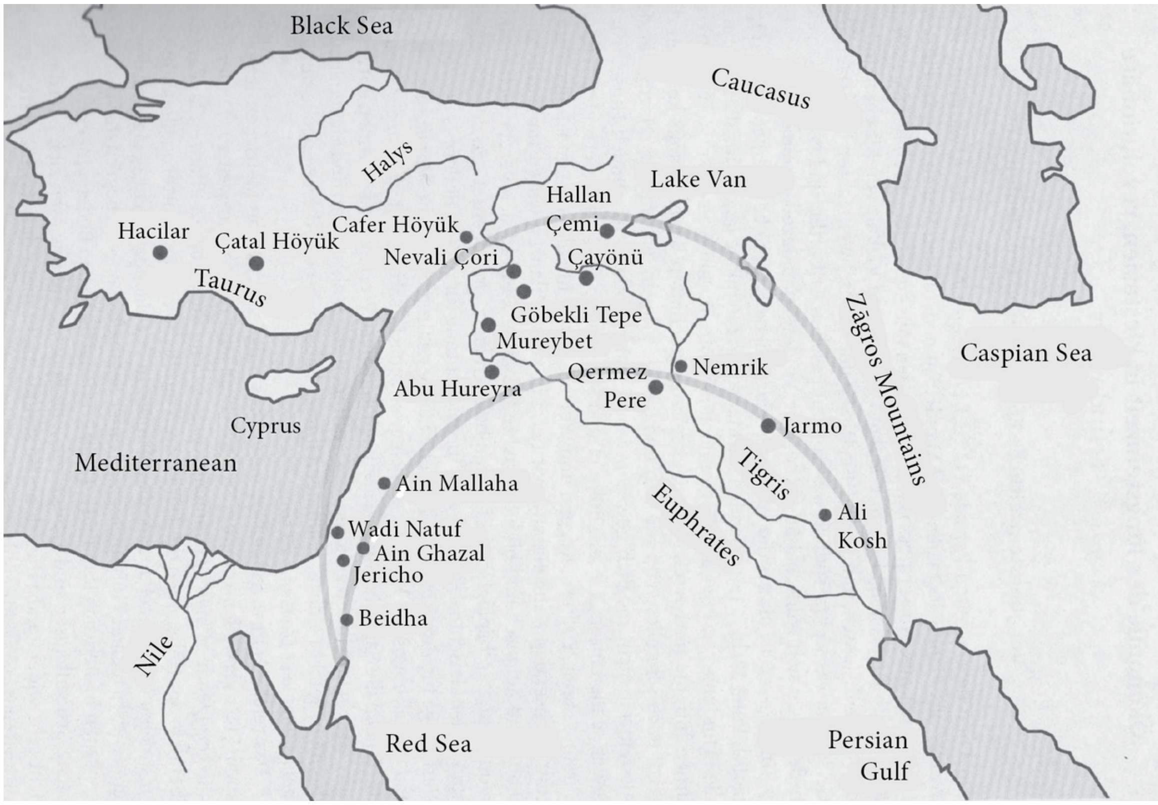
The warming period was abruptly interrupted sometime between 11,000 and 10,200. Within only a decade there was a sharp, lasting drop in temperature. Glaciers advanced again, though not to the degree of the last ice age.[2] In the 10th millennium, a similarly sudden and rapid warming within just a few decades caused the continental ice plate to retreat far northward, definitively ending the period of ice ages. Glacial rivers could now flow north and formed lakes such as Lake Ladoga, Lake Onega, and the Baltic Sea, which at that time was also a large inland sea.[3] Not until around 9,500 did climate conditions stabilize with warmth and plentiful rain.

These climate disturbances greatly transformed the plant and animal worlds. In Europe and North Asia, the ice-age steppe was overgrown with juniper and birch until sparse pine forest took over, albeit slowly. Dense mixed forest gradually grew. Animals of the cold steppe, wild horses and reindeer herds, retreated far to the north, where tundra still existed, while forest animals such as red deer, deer, elk, aurochs and wild boar now populated the land. As the floodwaters of the Great Thaw ebbed, a lot of water remained in Europe and North Asia and, from this time on, they were situated in the temperate climate zone.

The climate situation in West Asia was very different, and as a result, so was the development of human culture. During the ice ages in the north of Europe and Asia, West Asia was also cold in its mountainous regions. Large glaciers covered the mountain ranges and high valleys of the Taurus and Pontic Mountains (Turkey), likewise in the Caucasus, the eastern Anatolian mountains (eastern Turkey) and the Zāgros Mountains (northern Iraq and western Iran), whose highest peaks reach more than 4,000 and

5,000 m. The high plateaus between the mountains were tundra, watered by the summer melt from the mountains. ←90 | 91→Giant lakes formed whose waters did not evaporate.[4] At that time, the Konya Plain in central Anatolia was a shallow inland sea, as were what are today the Great Salt Desert and the Lut Desert of Persia (Iran).

The West Asian ice-age culture resembled that of Europe, but conditions soon diverged. In the so-called “Fertile Crescent” the earliest far-reaching innovations produced a completely new culture. The Fertile Crescent encompassed the hilly area on the southern edge of the mountain ranges and curved in a crescent shape from the eastern Mediterranean coast (Levant) along the flanks of the Eastern Taurus to the foothills of the Zāgros Mountains. It was only a narrow strip between icy mountains in the north and the hot, swampy lowlands of the Land between Two Rivers (Mesopotamia) to the south (Map 2). In this fragile, precarious zone, over millennia, the trailblazing innovations of the Neolithic Era were made, which completely transformed the world and created the basis for our way of life. This was the “Neolithic Revolution,” whose path we will now follow.


Black Sea
Caucasus
Halys
Lake Van
Hallan
Çemi
Hacilar
Çatal Höyük
Cafer Höyük
Nevali Çori
Çayönü
Taurus
Göbekli Tepe
Mureybet
Zagros Mountains
Caspian Sea
Nemrik
Qermez
Pere
Abu Hureyra
Cyprus
Jarmo
Mediterranean
Tigris
Ain Mallaha
Euphrates
Ali
Kosh
Wadi Natuf
Ain Ghazal
Jericho
Beidha
Nile
Red Sea
Persian
Gulf

Map 2: Neolithic settlements in the "Fertile Crescent" (from 10,000 BCE)

Neolithic Economy in West Asia: Revolutionary Inventions

Pre-Neolithic Epoch: The First Settlements

With the warming at the end of the ice ages (13th millennium), moderately dense forest of oak, pistachio, and almond trees spread across the hills of the Fertile Crescent. Plenty of water flowed down from thawing glaciers, and there was reliable rainfall. A variety of bushes and wild legumes thrived in the forest, inhabited by aurochs, red deer, and wild boar. The open land a little further south was covered by many kinds of grasses and wild grains covered where wild sheep, goats, and donkeys ran free, as well as gazelles.

←91 | 92→In this epoch, called the pre-Neolithic (Epipalaeolithic, 13th to 11th millennium), hunters found plenty of wild game, and even more after the invention of the bow and arrow, as indicated by findings of microliths ground to razor-sharp points. These could bring down fast-moving animals like deer and gazelle, something that would have been impossible with Palaeolithic hunting tools. [5] There were abundant plants for gatherers: legumes, such as wild lentils, peas, beans, and vetch, and wild grains, including barley, emmer, einkorn, rye, and wheat, contributing to an overall increase in food resources. All these plants were native to the Fertile Crescent and grew in dense clusters. Although perishable plant food rarely leaves archaeological traces, as opposed to bones left from meat-eating, numerous finds of food-processing tools, such as grindstones, mortars and pestles, and sickles with sharp, embedded stones, attest to its importance at that time.[6] Since the gatherers were mainly women, they presumably developed and owned these tools. However, finds of grindstones and sickles do not yet indicate the presence of agriculture because we are still looking at an economy of gathering and hunting in this epoch.

Plentiful food made it possible for people to stay longer in one place. They no longer had to travel long distances to gather what they needed because edible plants were available nearby. Animals, too, had stronger ties to a place with bountiful food sources and could be hunted close to home. Eventually, this led to short-term settlements, where inhabitants built round huts partially sunk into the ground, or “pit-houses,” which were typical in this epoch. These did not prove to be particularly robust, as they were hardly more than a fixed version of the yurt-like shelters found in Palaeolithic camps. They contained a hearth, along with grindstones and mortars and stone-lined pits to store the gathered food. Gathering and grinding grain was a woman’s job, and remained so for millennia. In research, this was found out based on typical bone deformations on female skeletons.[7] Thus the round huts were primarily homes for women, who no longer needed to cover so much territory to gather food. The hunting activities of men, on the other hand, still called for greater distances to be covered, albeit less than before. This meant the daily lives of men and women gradually diverged. However, this did not undermine the egalitarian way of life of the communities.[8] It can be seen that the round huts were arranged around a central space where women and men gathered to discuss their issues with each other.[9]

Archaeologists did not find such early examples of sedentary living everywhere, but only in certain preferred places. At the same time, many humans still lived under rock overhangs (abris) and in caves, moving camps according to the season. One of the earliest settlements was Jericho in the Jordan Valley of the southern Levant, at the western point of the Fertile Crescent (see Map 2). It was located at the end of a wadi (ravine) with no drainage, which flowed into a swamp harboring many varieties of plants and animals.[10] This cultural epoch in the Levant owes its name to another settlement in nearby Wadi an-Natuf: it is called "Natufian."[11] Natufian cultural sites extended across Israel/Palestine, Jordania, and Lebanon to Syria. In Abu Hureyra on the Syrian northern Euphrates, inhabitants already planted wild grains (before 11,000), although they did not yet selectively propagate them, and this was surely not the only experiment of its kind.[12] This new activity followed on from the increasingly sedentary lives of women, who observed new seeds growing from the leftovers of what they had gathered. They then began to intentionally sow grain for harvest, taking a fundamental step forward. At that time, however, this still had no effect on the culture.

Below the Taurus Mountains there were also privileged locations with some of the earliest settlements, such as, for example, Hallan Çemi (southeastern Anatolia, Turkey). Here people made another important discovery. Since sedentary communities, in contrast to Palaeolithic groups, could not migrate onward when locally available food resources became scarce, they tried to preserve them in various ways. Keeping animals nearby as "living food" was one strategy, which succeeded there with pigs.[13] Taming wild animals requires a lot of patience, but some animals approach willingly. Refuse heaps near kitchens probably attracted wild boar to root for food, and through such proximity they lost their fear of humans. Here, too, it was probably the women who observed the animals and lured them close enough until they succeeded in fencing them in. This did not yet lead to animal breeding. Another animal, meanwhile, followed the men, sharing in the leftovers from the hunt: the dog, which later became an important hunting companion.

One of the earliest settlements, Çayönü, was located in another desirable place in southeastern Anatolia. It achieved an extraordinary permanence throughout ←94 | 95→the Neolithic due to the valuable natural resources nearby. Here there were highly coveted raw materials such as basalt, marble, flint, and limestone.[14] Hallan Çemi and Çayönü were both located in the middle of the Fertile Crescent (see Map 2). But its farthest eastern point below the Zāgros Mountains also had very early settlements, such as Jarmo and Ali Kosh.[15]

This warm period, which could almost be called paradisiacal, was abruptly interrupted in the 11th millennium by the last cold phase, with a return to ice-age conditions. In higher regions the tundra returned, causing a retreat of the fauna-rich forest. It still persisted in the Levant, benefiting from the mild Mediterranean climate. Wild plant resources also became much scarcer, with disastrous results for humans and ending the pre-Neolithic culture. A few groups retreated to the Mediterranean coast, where they subsisted through fishing and began to build boats and travel the sea. Others returned to the mobility of Palaeolithic hunting and gathering.

Lower Pre-Pottery Neolithic: The First Temples and Grain Fields

Such insecure living conditions were further intensified by the next climate phase at the end of the 11th millennium, as the weather warmed rapidly and finally became hot. The rains resumed and oak forests returned to the mountainous regions, but the Fertile Crescent became too dry for forests, and scattered populations of Mediterranean trees grew there instead. During this time the lakes in mountain basins and on high plateaus evaporated almost completely, leaving behind nothing but parched, salty steppes and deserts, which still exist today. In the southern lowlands of

Mesopotamia, temperatures rose rapidly, and the two great rivers Euphrates and Tigris flowed mostly through hot steppes and deserts to reach wide wetlands before flowing into the sea—this was truly not a good place to live! At that time the best climate for habitation in West Asia was in the Fertile Crescent, even though climate turbulence had laid the foundation for new human behavior patterns within which religion became extraordinarily important.

And thus, the Lower Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN A) began with an archaeological bang.[16] The first sacred structures built by human hand originated in ←95 | 96→Göbekli Tepe, in the central Fertile Crescent (see Map 2), and from the very beginning their size was monumental—their find was an archaeological sensation! After all, these mighty edifices appeared at a time of impermanent settlements, meaning that the builders belonged to a gathering and hunting economy. Hence the buildings were not in a settlement or city, but stood alone on a single ridge with two breast-like hills at the highest elevation. Here the buildings were literally buried into the body of the Earth.[17] The oldest edifices of Göbekli Tepe (10th millennium) are round or oval in shape, and 10–30 m in diameter. Benches lined the walls, interrupted at intervals by superbly smoothed T-shaped pillars supporting the roof. These were up to 5 m tall and decorated with animal reliefs. In the middle stood two T-pillars that were even taller and more richly decorated (Fig. 1). To date, four of these large structures have been excavated in direct proximity to one another. But geophysical investigation reveals that 16 more of these sites still lie buried, some round, some rectangular, with around 200 pillars.[18] These enormous dimensions overshadow everything previously known from those early times. Not only are the number and density of these religious buildings incomparable, but so is the monumental architecture with megalith pillars, predating European megalith architecture by 6,000 years. And no gradual development can be seen that could have introduced such massive structures. Instead, they seem to have appeared out of the blue.

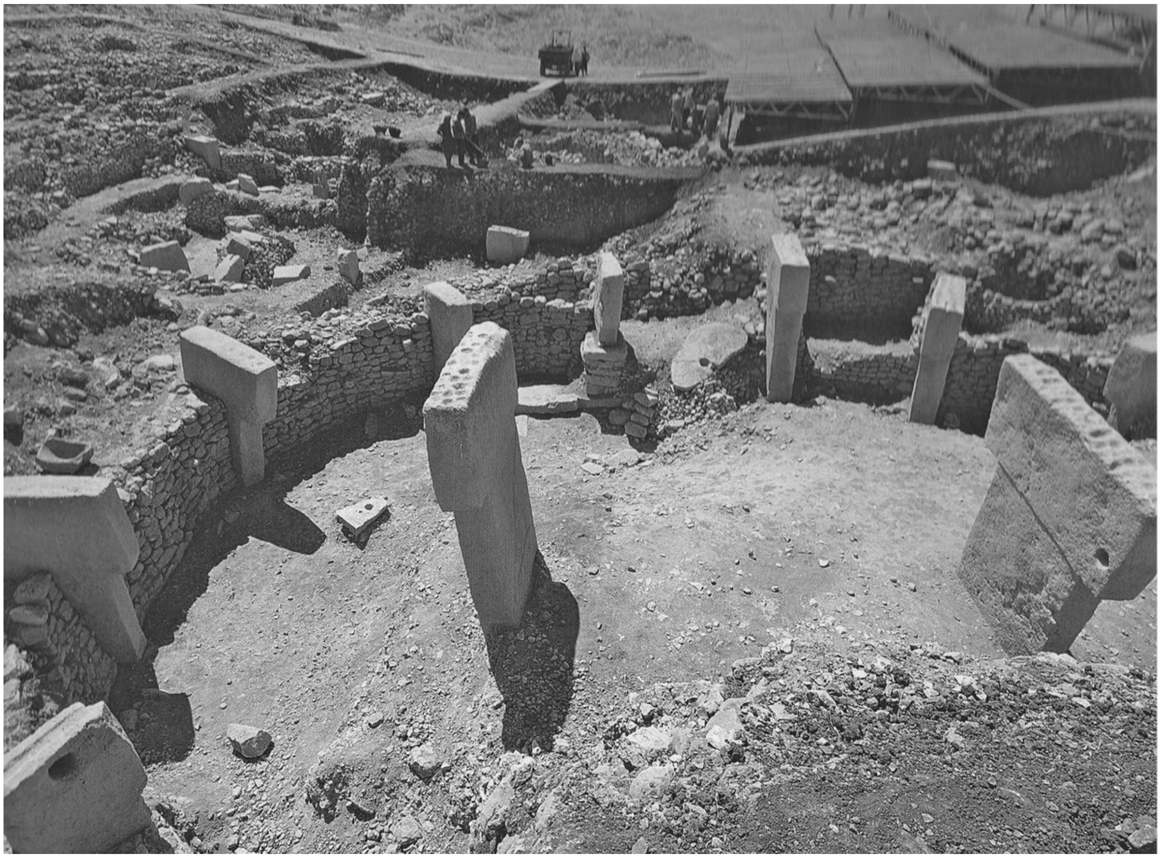


Fig. 1: Temple D of Göbekli Tepe (Southeast Turkey)

What could have inspired such achievements? After the traumatic experience with the cold in the 11th millennium that had led to the collapse of Pre-Neolithic culture, the disturbingly rapid warming again caused existential insecurity for humans. In this region, it seems, the semi-settled gatherers and hunters joined forces to tackle this threat with a common appeal to divine powers. Their great religiosity manifested itself in these gigantic structures, erected over two millennia, where, by celebrating rituals and festivals, they bonded together. In that way, the first temples in human history came into being.

However, the complex technology of megalithic construction they invented had consequences for their way of life. Constant building work and the need to provide for workers caused people to remain in one place for longer periods and, gradually, they formed communities settling in the wider periphery of the religious site, organizing themselves for the construction effort. Although the region had rich stocks of native wild grains, a vast transformation of economic practices was set in motion at this time. What had been occasional, experimental ←96 | 97→crop cultivation now became deliberate practice. Women, as plant experts, now developed hoe-agriculture on a large scale, another activity requiring organized cooperation. Women's ability to plant large tracts and feed entire tribes with hoe-agriculture has been documented in ethnological reports on traditional agriculture of the Iroquois in northeastern North America. Cultivation was exclusively in women's hands, making them the sole caretakers of the Earth.[19] In addition to the extensive farming around Göbekli Tepe, the enclosure of animals as "living food" probably followed, providing a more dependable food source than men's hunting alone. The first to be enclosed were sheep and goats; these animals were living in the surrounding mountains, hills, and valleys as their natural habitat.[20] ←97 | 98→Domestication of cattle came later. It is likely that sheep and goats voluntarily approached the settlements, drawn primarily to the women's new grain fields as a convenient place to eat. The women, in turn, needed to protect their crops. The docile sheep and curious goats probably became used to the women's presence, and so could eventually be enclosed. Whenever hunters returned with abandoned young animals, women would have been responsible for feeding and taming them, with the men being fully occupied by hunting and construction work. In this way, women decisively created this new kind of economy. The many Neolithic containers shaped like women, pots, jugs, and grain storage jars testify to this. With their symbolic attributes of nourishing breasts, they demonstrate that women were the community's primary providers.[21] Gradually, men's and women's spheres of work became differentiated, growing very dissimilar, but within each sphere there was great variety. The female and male spheres of work complemented each other, and people worked in close cooperation. There are no indications of hierarchical judgments identifying the work of one as more important than the other.[22]

We can see here that it was primarily religious construction activity which, in this case, led to the first cultivation economy. It was a *mixed economy of hunting, gathering, and agriculture*. Added to this was *simple animal husbandry*, whereas the systematic domestication of animals was still unknown.[23] These early steps toward a new architecture and culture spread throughout the central Fertile Crescent. Communication networks already established in the Palaeolithic Era to distribute information and gifts were now also used to pass on knowledge of the new technology and cultivation strategy.

However, the systematic cultivation of cereals did not only appear around Göbekli Tepe; in fact, there were several places where these new agricultural practices emerged. Archaeologists have also found remains of cultivated grain in the Levant, and more importantly, numerous sickle blades, indicating that a mixed economy had also originated there.[24] During this period, settlements generally became larger and more numerous because people increasingly gathered ←98 | 99→together to carry out their new tasks. The old round building style was still prevalent in the settlements, but huts had now turned into more stable houses with stone foundations, walls of clay brick, and domed roofs.[25] Inhabitants began to build granaries that were considerably bigger than the dwellings and also served as communal houses. Here people gathered for councils and religious ceremonies; supplies stockpiled there belonged to the community and were consumed together. Such round, semi-recessed granaries used for meetings and rituals are still known to ethnologists today, one example being the Hopi “Kivas” (Arizona).

Upper Pre-Pottery Neolithic: Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Mysterious Walls

During this time (Neolithic PPN B) there were other important innovations everywhere. In plant cultivation, women now used selective propagation to improve grain and legume varieties. This resulted in much larger kernels and seeds with increased yields. Selective breeding of domestic animals was also an art, since confined animals became smaller, requiring the reintroduction of genes from the wild population.[26] These decisive changes led to a steady decline in the importance of men’s hunting, though it was not completely abandoned. This was the beginning of the typical Neolithic *actively producing economy of agriculture and animal husbandry.*

Once again, the towns expanded. Some of them had hundreds or thousands of inhabitants, especially in settlements exceeding 10 hectares. In the Levant, this was the case in the towns of Basta and ʿAin Ghazal (surface area 15 hectares).[27] The houses grew larger, too; they were now rectangular and made from shaped stone or molded clay bricks, with weight-bearing wooden beams inside. They were built on two levels, the lower level being used both for storage and to ventilate the living area above.[28] With the exception of the parts made from matting and clay, the primary builders were probably men, who therefore found a new area of activity.

During these times the sacred character of the communal buildings, no longer used for storage, became ever clearer. They resembled the dwellings, round at first, and later rectangular, but were located at the edges of settlements and, in ←99 | 100→accordance with tradition, still partly or completely sunk into the ground. The large inner room was decorated with religious symbols. Interestingly, these buildings had strict geometric outlines, always with the same alignment and openings facing east and south. Such regularity suggests usage for astronomical observation, which was important for timing activities such as planting and harvesting in the new agricultural culture. These buildings were considered so sacred they were filled in or burnt when new settlements were built over the old floor plan, or when the place was abandoned.[29]

In the central Fertile Crescent, the temples of Göbekli Tepe became models for the temples of Çayönü, Nevalı Çori, and other places, but now these buildings were located within permanent settlements (see Map 2). The religious edifices—always only one in each epoch—were repeatedly replaced, each building atop the older ones, at least six times in Çayönü, indicating a long-lasting religious practice. These temples were now excellently faced with limestone slabs and, as in Göbekli Tepe, had the same arrangement of large T-pillars.[30]

There was also monumental architecture in the Levant in the western Fertile Crescent, but of an entirely different nature, as shown by the walls and tower of Jericho. The stone tower was extremely thick and heavy and over 8 m tall with an inner staircase.[31] The tower and the mighty walls, reconstructed three times one upon the other, made such a deep impression on contemporaries that it figures in a later biblical legend: these edifices, it claims, despite their monumental size, were toppled solely by the trumpets of Joshua’s Israelite troops—thus proving the greatness of the new God. The legend implies that these structures were defences, and as soon as they were excavated, archaeologists interpreted them as “fortifications” with a “watchtower.”[32] Nowadays, some still cite this as support for the hypothesis that war was prevalent in the Neolithic Age.

Several scholars have argued against this view: first, in that sparsely populated land, where would the many enemies have come from to justify such a massive fortress? And throughout the entire epoch, Jericho was the only town with a wall. Second, the alleged “watchtower” was located within the walls and not outside, as would have made more sense for defensive purposes. In addition, this round tower was structurally similar to the sacred communal round buildings in other locations, which suggests a religious purpose rather than a military one. At its top was a roofed structure, and several carefully arranged burial sites were found at its foot. [33] Third, as for the mighty walls, they only reached their full height with time, as they were repeatedly heightened in various phases of Jericho’s existence. This suggests they were less for defense against enemies and more in response to repeated flooding from the nearby Wadi el-Mafjar. Such sudden floods occurred after heavy rainfall and threatened the town, so a first wall was built for protection. After being repeatedly undermined by the forces of nature, it was twice heightened and thickened in vulnerable areas and a drainage ditch was added.[34]

According to this view, the tower and wall of Jericho represent an impressive communal achievement to protect the people of that time and their hard-won food supplies.[35] A retreat was no longer possible so here, as elsewhere, strong community solidarity developed.

Before any further development of this creative cultural epoch (PPN B) was possible, it ended abruptly. Once again, radical climate fluctuations affected not just this area, but the entire northern hemisphere. Around 6,200 BCE there was a sudden steep drop in temperature that lasted about 400 years, followed by a very hot period. The already dry zones of the entire belt extending from the Sahara across western and central Asia to the Gobi Basin received no more rainfall and changed into deserts.

The Fertile Crescent, too, that narrow strip where people practiced rain-fed agriculture, dried out and became infertile, and settlements there were abandoned.[36] Contributing to this was the overgrazing of land in the new pasture economy. The domestication of sheep, goats, and cattle began a trend of increasing herd sizes, consuming all the vulnerable plants and grazing the hills bare.[37] Unlike the care, feeding and taming of a few domestic animals by women, large herds were more likely to be men's responsibility. But here ecological limits were transgressed, as evidenced in the phase of decline. Even earlier, during the thousands of years of constructing the monumental buildings, deforestation was ←101 | 102→taking place on the mountainsides. The megalithic T-pillars and stone blocks were carried on wooden rollers, which led to the excessive felling of trees. At the time no-one foresaw the consequences of these actions, but in the new phase of intense climate change, the stressed landscape could no longer recover.

Large towns such as ʿAin Ghazal were now overpopulated, and they disintegrated as groups of farmers dispersed and pastoralists drove their herds into the steppe regions.[38] Groups of farmers, whether from cities or villages, were forced to migrate to zones with access to water, such as the lower-lying hot regions near the Euphrates and Tigris. As a consequence, the economy split into two parts: some continued to farm along the rivers while others became pastoral nomads in the steppes and deserts, where they were dependent on scarce springs and waterholes. People not only retreated to the south, but in every direction, including northward into the valleys of the Caucasus, and into its northern lowlands all the way to the Caspian Sea.

Late Neolithic Epoch: Pottery, Copper, and New Crafts

Before it came to this general decline, the Pottery Neolithic (Late Neolithic) had already started in certain areas outside the Fertile Crescent.[39] Compared with the other Neolithic epochs, it developed relatively late in West Asia, but had a future in the flow of migrants toward the west. [40]

The transition to Pottery Neolithic was most pronounced in Çatal Höyük on the Konya Plain, south of the central Anatolian highlands (Central Turkey) (see Map 2). Today the region is very dry and quite inhospitable, but Çatal Höyük lay on the banks of what was once an extensive lake, where a variety of flora and fauna thrived.[41] Here a large town arose, beginning around 7,400 in the late Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN B) and ending around 6,000, during the same period of dramatic climate change that depopulated the Fertile Crescent. It owes its long duration and size to obsidian, an igneous rock from the region’s volcanoes, which upon cooling becomes as hard as glass and as sharp as a knife. At that time obsidian was a highly desirable good, so Çatal Höyük carried out wide-ranging exchanges in obsidian that attracted a lot of people to the settlement. Through this it was in contact with what were then the centers of the Fertile Crescent, but it developed independently based on the region’s traditions, as can be seen in its predecessor Aşıklı Höyük.[42] Aşıklı Höyük was the oldest permanent settlement in Central Anatolia (around 8,500-7,400, PPN A), and it also owed its relatively large size to obsidian exploitation. Its architecture already shows the special feature of one-room rectangular mud-brick dwellings in close proximity, with an entrance over the flat roofs. The roofs were not only sites for many activities, but also acted as paths throughout the entire settlement. Later,

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Çatal Höyük had the same building style, but more refined and on a larger scale.

Çatal Höyük, then, did not appear out of nowhere. But what makes this city unique is the creativity of its inhabitants in arts and crafts. They mastered a wide range of handicrafts, including the production of luxury objects such as obsidian mirrors, and ceremonial daggers. Particularly interesting is the metal jewelry produced from molten lead and copper, demonstrating advanced metalworking skills.[43] In the Pre-Pottery Neolithic people already worked with copper (for example in Çayönü, Aşıklı Höyük, 9th millennium), but they treated it as stone before they began to cast the metal.[44] The people of Çatal Höyük especially cultivated sculpture and painting, decorating every available surface. Their art, unparalleled for the time in both quantity and quality, made this settlement world-famous. They also produced animal and human figures in clay, and soon the first pottery vessels appeared alongside the traditional containers of basketry, wood, leather, and stone. These were much lighter than stone containers and better for storage and cooking, but they broke easily and, for a long time, they were only of secondary importance in households.[45] Nevertheless, they mark the beginning of the Pottery Neolithic.

The production and art of pottery, in addition to the advanced weaving also found in Çatal Höyük, are excellent indicators of women's artisanship.[46] Women invented pottery vessels: first unfired, later fired, and finally they painted them. For millennia they practiced this art which, like weaving, was considered magic—as can be seen in today's imdigenous societies, such as among the traditional Berber women in Kabylia (North Africa).[47] Certainly, the path to this achievement was long: it had already begun in the Palaeolithic Era with the modeling of female figurines; not by men, as some claim, but by women's hands. These figurines had religious significance for women and the community, as well as ritual uses. Archaeological finds in a Palaeolithic shelter in Mal'ta near Lake Baikal (Siberia) revealed that jewelry, needles, stone tools, and female figurines made of ivory were in the women's half of the shelter; in the men's half were hunting equipment

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and ivory bird figures.[48] Since, at that time, personal objects belonged to the people who had made them, it is clear that women shaped the small female figurines while men made the animal figures. The men, as hunters, knew animal shapes best, and the women had intimate knowledge of the female body with its sacred capabilities. Women also made female figurines from clay. The firing of clay was probably discovered accidentally when a figure fell into the fire and was later found to be hardened. This happened very early on, since numerous female figurines of fired clay were found at the famous Palaeolithic site Dolní Věstonice in Moravia (27,000-22,000). As so often happens, this technology also began in the religious realm, and eventually women began to apply their collective experience to pottery making, resulting in the origin of ceramic art.

Çatal Höyük, with its many arts and crafts, was very important for the westward expansion of the Neolithic way of life. It spread first into the lake region of southwestern Anatolia.[49] Women there greatly improved the quality of the pottery. They started coating it with red pigments and decorating it with red stripes and patterns. Sometimes, as in the vessels depicting animals and humans in relief or with handles shaped like animal heads, the result was art; sometimes entire vessels were shaped like women or animals.[50] Many exclusively female figurines have also been found: 40 specimens in Hacılar and 80 in Höyücek. They were made with care and expressiveness and were located in special places in the house, indicating a ritual function.[51]

The westward spread of this way of life along the rivers finally reached the coasts of southern and western Anatolia, where farmers lived in proximity to native hunters, fishermen, and gatherers. Further settlement along these coasts ←104 | 105→occurred by boat. As a result, the settlers became increasingly confident at sea and finally crossed the waters to Cyprus. There, permanent settlement began in the 8th millennium and a unique culture developed; the same was true of Crete from the 7th millennium. In each new land, people brought along their Neolithic economy and culture, and so it expanded at an increasing rate.[52]

Whether and in what way the now fully-developed Neolithic way of life reached Southeast Europe (the Balkans) has long been a point of contention in the absence of archaeological sites documenting this passage. This situation has changed fundamentally within the last ten years, allowing the westward spread of the population to be reconstructed. Settlements have been found on the eastern coasts of the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, and also on both sides of the Bosporus as far as Thessaly (Greece).[53] Neolithic culture appeared there from 6,200-5,500 without any precursors, indicating it was imported from elsewhere.

In many respects, the level of culture was now simpler than before, due to the fact that these people moved away from the old cultural centers during their westward migration. One new development, however, was wooden houses with woven walls which were now built instead of the earlier mud brick structures. Archaeologists have found these in both western Anatolia and the Balkans (Southeast Europe), and also the red, polished, and painted pottery. Pottery has already been fully developed when the southeast-European settlements were founded. In spite of differences, finds from western Anatolia, from the Balkans as far as the Danube region, reveal many common features that testify to this westward cultural migration.[54]

Neolithic Social Order in West Asia: New Complexity

Complex Societies: Elites or Equality?

The question whether Neolithic large settlements with new complexity such as Çatal Höyük should be viewed as a “town” or “city” touches on the Neolithic ←105 | 106→social order. It has long been heatedly disputed, and the answers are unclear and contradictory. The first person to excavate these sites already used the term “town” in the sense of “city” and gave his reasons.[55] In his opinion size is not the only decisive criterion, although the settlement had a surface area of 13.5 hectares with an estimated 8,000 occupants for the total area.[56] This was very large for this early epoch and corresponded to other large settlements such as Basta, Tell Aswad, and ʿAin Ghazal in the Levant. A second criterion he suggested is the degree of differentiation of craftsmanship and of culture, that is, the complexity that leads to high culture. This presupposes a specialized division of labor beyond what single households could accomplish, as was clearly the case with Çatal Höyük, ʿAin Ghazal, and other large settlements making them *cities with high culture*, the earliest in human history.[57]

This is where disagreements arise. According to an old, entrenched prejudice, division of labor automatically leads to hierarchical social patterns with male dominated "elites," although there is absolutely no proof of any such connection. This has led to the odd claim that hierarchical organization with "elites" existed in smaller settlements, even those from very early times, which had specialized workshops and larger "special buildings"—meaning the communal buildings—and that this should be considered as progress.[58] Çatal Höyük, however, in spite of its size and extensive differentiation of labor, showed no hierarchical patterns, so was not considered as a city.[59] This completely confused the picture of Neolithic social forms.

With somewhat less bias, one might correctly conclude that greater complexity does not lead directly to hierarchy. More precisely, economic differentiation and specialization cannot be equated with social differentiation, inequality, and political centralization.[60] Such a false equivalency is linked to the erroneous idea that high culture, or even civilization, is only possible with hierarchy—a fixed patriarchal pattern. Whatever has no hierarchy is dismissed as "lower," "primitive," or "backward." As a result, "delayed development," that means a step backwards, is attributed to Çatal Höyük because of its egalitarian structure, in spite of its obvious innovations—in comparison with the earlier, alleged hierarchical centers in southeastern Anatolia such as Göbekli Tepe.[61] With this mindset it is assumed that, in early societies, excess production led immediately to the appropriation of surpluses by certain individuals who then, driven by self-interest and greed for status and power, exploited others by controlling access to

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resources and withholding them. According to this view, “special buildings” played a special role as hoarding spaces—a complete misunderstanding of their communal and sacred purpose. In this way, the beginning of individualism, private property, and male dominance is already claimed for the Neolithic period—a purely patriarchal projection into the past, but one that is widespread in archaeology. It clearly derives from today’s neoliberal thinking and is reiterated in Marxist thought, despite the latter’s critique of neoliberalism.[62] With the picture muddied by such prejudices, the social order of the earliest settlements, both villages and cities, must naturally remain a mystery.

What do archaeological finds tell us about the Neolithic social order in West Asia? First, we need to be clear that, for that time period, there is no convincing evidence for the construct of the “Big Man” who allegedly dominated by means of an early hierarchy with organized centralism and hereditary elites. Such patterns are projected from later systems onto these early epochs in order to demonstrate a linear progression from the inner organization of these early societies to hierarchically organized states. Underlying this is a one-dimensional theory of historical development, or linear social evolutionism, according to which things advance smoothly, becoming ever bigger and better—which is completely unproven and extremely ideological.[63] Instead, another model is conceivable, namely that, for individuals, the social cohesion of their communities, produced through cooperation and the building up of collective identity, was critically important. This model is in direct opposition to the model of social rivalry and competition as the ←107 | 108→origin of the Neolithic way of life, since its solidarity was founded on a constant renewal of social and ritual equality.[64]

Can this model be supported by archaeological finds? First to the Levant: for the Neolithic villages and cities there, no notable architectural differentiation has been found in the pre-pottery era. The dwellings are similar, and only the community buildings differ. The burial customs also reveal no markers of rank, neither with regard to gender nor individual status. In the earliest times, the dead were buried without grave goods and ornaments, and even in cases of special treatment such as skull burials or placement in special burial places, equality is evident.[65] Regarding the different tasks carried out, however, skeletal analyses now reveal a much greater workload than was seen in the Palaeolithic. Typical wear and tear on the bones shows that women generally took care of hoeing the fields and grinding grain, along with fiber production and weaving—with many additional activities only determined indirectly. Men were generally occupied with heavy work such as clearing the land, digging, and building with logs and stone in addition to hunting and, to some extent, herding. Nevertheless, in spite of this division of labor, there is no indication that one sphere of work was valued less highly than another, and also none that one gender bore the main burden of work or was controlled by the other.[66] So we must start from a proposition of *complementary equality* in the world of work.

What is particularly interesting is the fact that, in the Levant, there is a lack of any evidence from architecture and skeletal analysis of aggression or conflict between individuals or groups. There is also nothing that points to hostile acts between settlements, which is astonishing considering the rapid growth of some settlements to the size of cities. Even these were not “capital cities” subjugating smaller towns and demanding tributes from them, because there are no indications that some settlements controlled others by armed force.[67] That is to say, there was no “staff of enforcement” such as warriors and military, the basic requirements for hierarchy and dominance of some individuals over others, so ←108 | 109→wars did not occur.[68] For the Levant, then, we must jettison the model of social rivalry and competition as a basis for the new Neolithic way of life.

But is the same true for the Pottery Neolithic in Central Anatolia? The best example here is the city of Çatal Höyük, where social patterns have been thoroughly studied. The similar house sizes indicate an egalitarian society, and here, too, burial customs show no differences in social rank or gender.[69] Bone analyses also show no differences in nutrition and lifestyle.[70] It was not the case that men were primarily active outside with hunting and herding while the women labored in smoke-filled houses, cooped up in the “private sphere.” There is proof that women and men spent similar amounts of time around the fire in poorly ventilated houses working at a variety of skilled crafts.[71] Likewise, both women and men had their own outdoor activities; the women in gardens and fields, the men with hunting and livestock. In those early times there was no fundamental distinction between “private” and “public”—that, too, is a later patriarchal construct related to the monogamous seclusion of women. During the Neolithic Era men and women moved about freely. In addition, the roofs of Çatal Höyük replaced public paths and squares, being the social arena where both genders were visible with their activities.[72]

Finally, it has also been suggested that the tight construction of Çatal Höyük’s houses with their rooftop entries served defensive purposes, impeding enemy access to the city and requiring hand-to-hand combat from house to house. However, no indications exist of attacks, massacres, or plundering over the 1,400 years of the city’s long existence; in other words, it was a relatively peaceful time.[73]

Some might think that huge buildings such as the temple of Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Anatolia required the “Big Man” to plan the construction and ←109 | 110→organize the massive workforce and its various tasks. This has led to claims about “elites” and hierarchical social order, though the only basis for these arguments is the large buildings themselves. An interesting archaeological investigation from Neolithic Greece shows how dubious this premise is, applicable equally to the Neolithic areas of West Asia, from which the Greek cultures derived.[74] It shows that Neolithic settlements in Thessaly and on the Greek eastern coast were very complex in terms of the intensification and differentiation of agricultural production, as well as specialized craftsmanship in the production of stone tools, painted ceramics, and jewelry, and in the wide-ranging exchange of goods. There were specialized workshops, granaries, and also large structures such as extensive stone walls.[75] These characteristics have generally caused archaeologists to presume the existence of an “elite” with a “hierarchy,” which used surpluses and specialized products for its own purposes.

And yet there is no sign of social inequality in these places. The construction of the houses is more or less similar, with none notably larger than others. They are arranged in groups, each of which is allotted similar space in the settlement, possibly suggesting the residence of a clan. Most importantly, despite craft specialization, an *equal division of material goods* was found in all houses. That is, people practiced a high degree of division of labor, surely with unequal skill and probably with variable success, but all goods were always distributed equally (case study, Dimini, eastern Greece).[76] No one could be found who profited from division of labor or who monopolized specialized inventions at the expense of the community. Even luxury goods such as the exceptionally beautiful painted ceramics and exquisite shell jewelry were exported far and wide, but here, too, no hierarchy was seen in these communication relationships. Instead, luxury goods played a role as gifts in peace-building between neighboring settlements and with those in more distant cultural regions.[77]

The great storage structures were erected centrally within the towns, for example, at the top of a hill settlement. Here agricultural surplus was gathered. But here, too, there was no indication that any “Big Man” alone owned the surplus and derived power from it. Instead, the surplus belonged to the community, which used these supplies for gatherings, sacred practices, and common undertakings.[78] The large construction projects were such undertakings. These ←110 | 111→could rise not only vertically but also extend horizontally, as is seen in the six-fold oval-shaped stone walls symmetrically covering the entire hill of the Dimini settlement. They were not “fortifications” erected by a high command for military purposes—as was prematurely thought. More probably they were retaining walls for the steep slopes and prevented them from slipping. At the same time, they divided the settlement into the above-mentioned equal dwelling areas of clans, demonstrating the complex social order that endured there for centuries. Furthermore, the walls had four continuous openings at the four cardinal points, indicating a cosmological significance.[79]

What deeper motivation would cause people to invest the huge effort these building projects required, as already seen in the gigantic dimensions of Göbekli Tepe? The explanation lies in the need to promote social cohesion; such projects required cooperation, not competition. Despite all the differences among households and decentralized groups within settlements, such communal undertakings greatly reinforced a system of reciprocity and integration. They gave coherence to the social dynamic and constantly renewed social consensus. In other words, large-scale architecture served to build and strengthen an egalitarian community, not to weaken it. Likewise, the planning and complex organization of workers required for these projects are not proof of the existence of elites, but reflections of social and religious ideas shared by all and expressed in these structures. In this sense such projects helped to form the community’s identity, and were therefore of the greatest importance.[80]

In Göbekli Tepe, the megaliths brought together non-settled peoples from the entire region, much as the painted cave sanctuaries of the Palaeolithic had done. The difference was that people no longer found their places of worship in nature, but constructed them themselves, which required much more labor and resources. This had decisive consequences for their way of life, as already noted, because in the long term it led to large-scale agriculture and longer settled periods. But it did not produce “elites.” How could they have materialized so suddenly, when there had been none in the Palaeolithic in general, and in the West Asian Epipalaeolithic in particular?

These early societies were capable of organizing their increasing complexity horizontally, not hierarchically—as can still be observed today in complex matriarchal societies.[81] They had a number of methods for this, and self-organization for large building projects was a new and very effective one. Other factors also contributed to horizontal regional networks, such as the relocation of parts of the settlement. This occurred when a town grew too large for available resources, a more frequent occurrence, or to resolve conflicts. In the former case, a lineage of each clan moved out and founded a “daughter village” or “daughter town” in the vicinity. In the less frequent case of resolving conflict, the dissident group would move out and found its own settlement. In each case, friendly contact with the “mother village” or “mother town” was soon reestablished. For these and other reasons, new villages and towns were founded until the entire region was settled. In areas that were already fairly densely populated, making such expansion impossible, there were ways to limit population growth through birth control so as to maintain an egalitarian relationship with other settlements. It is noteworthy that, even in such cases, no internal or external hierarchy developed, as shown by the case studies from Thessaly.[82] The explanation is that hierarchy was not a social ideal; equality definitely was.

The Evolution of Matrilineality

Neolithic communities in villages and cities were made up of individual households, but who lived in them? Regarding the small round houses of the Lower Pre-Pottery Neolithic, it is often assumed that a “family” lived there like the nuclear father-mother-child family of today. The sudden appearance of this social construct, however, is due the typical, stereotyped backward projection of our late bourgeois way of life, where the nuclear family first emerged with industrialization 200–300 years ago. It is neither ancient nor “natural.” With the larger houses of later Neolithic epochs, on the other hand, the occupants are called “kinship groups,” but without further details regarding their structure.

The primary question here would be: how did “kinship groups” or “clans” come about at all, since the social order they represent is very different from the age-class groupings of the Palaeolithic? These categories seem so self-evident that no-one questions their longer historical development. As noted previously, the mother-child group was the elemental social unit of the Palaeolithic, and the same held true for the Neolithic epochs. In both cases, “fathers” in the meaning of biological paternity were unknown; this was due to women's free choice ←112 | 113→of partners and the unrestricted love life of both genders. Under such circumstances, paternity could not be identified. There is a difference, though: in the Palaeolithic, each mother-child group soon dissolved, since individuals lived their lives within their age classes and not within the family. In the Neolithic, on the other hand, with longer-lasting settlements, children remained longer with their mother in the home, especially daughters, who helped their mother with the agricultural tasks and domestic arts. Connected by the home and common work, the group expanded to include three or four generations. These occupied the same home or lived in adjacent dwellings, so groups of houses formed. This new way of life helped to identify a line from one daughter-generation to the next, in other words, to create female genealogy: this always being the clear line of birth. This vertically intersected the earlier age classes, which now lost their importance. The line of birth took the kinship or clan name of the founding mother, the first ancestress, which was usually derived from animals or plants venerated for their special qualities. This was the origin of *matrilineality*, or the *genealogy along the mother's line*. It applied not just to daughters, but also to sons, who continued to live in the mother's house, their birthplace. Their activities complemented those of the women and were needed by the kin group. Thus, the eldest mother and her daughters, sons, and grandchildren occupied the same house or group of houses. Matrilineality became *matrilocality*, as *residence in or near the mother's house*. Unrelated men came to mother-houses as lovers of young women for limited times, and were guests with no rights and therefore no duties. They were at home in their own mother-houses; they bore the maternal clan name and had rights and duties there.

Ethnological examples from matriarchal societies around the world reveal this exact pattern, opening our eyes to the possibility that it might have existed in the Neolithic Era as well.[83] A series of archaeological finds point to this. In the Neolithic settlement of Kfar HaHoresh (Upper Pre-pottery Neolithic, 8,200-7,000) in the Levant (Israel/Palestine), skeletal analysis has determined that biological markers of women and children matched, whereas the markers of men showed no commonalities with the women and children. In other words, the women and children were related; the children lived in the community or kin group of their mothers. The men, on the other hand, moved in temporarily with the women but soon left the group again. The research team concluded that ←113 | 114→gender relations were “equal” and there were “no classic family bonds.”[84]—We must ask: which classic family bonds, which didn’t actually exist, they were referring to? Presumably, once again, the late bourgeois-patriarchal nuclear family was the standard, with the implicit message that in the nuclear family relationships were not equal! However, the archaeological findings show “equal,” or even better, egalitarian gender relations, but beyond that, the beginning of mother-based communities or kinship groups.

Findings in Çatal Höyük (Pottery Neolithic) show a stronger integration of men into this new social order. There were various burial forms, one of which was the interment of individual skeletons beneath the floors of homes. These burials were rather exceptions as their number does not correspond to the population in the settlements; so there must have been cemeteries which have not yet been found. Presumably, the exceptional burials were for special female and male ancestors, to honor them and thereby ensure they continued to bless the home. The first excavator had already determined that the skeletons had not been placed randomly under the floor, but lay under raised platforms used for sitting and sleeping, located along the walls. There was always one larger east-facing platform near the hearth, and usually a smaller one in the corner of the north wall. Beneath these platforms lay the bones of the dead, with the male ancestor’s grave under the smaller corner platform and the grave of the female ancestor, or ancestress, under the larger one.[85] Individual cases of children buried close to the ancestress or directly beneath the hearth were discovered, but they were never buried close to the man. It is to the credit of the archaeologist who first made these discoveries that he declared outright, “The sociological conclusions to be drawn from this are obvious.”[86]

Here again we can deduce that the house belonged to the woman and was seen as the mother-house; the children were clearly affiliated with the mother—which indicates matrilineality. Her platform was near the hearth, where she spent time, in life as in death, near this place that was sacred and central to the community of the house. In addition, the ancestress’s resting place was especially elevated, being carefully plastered and often decorated with red as the color of ←114 | 115→life, and oriented towards the east, the direction of light and life. This symbolism identifies her as life-giver of the kinship group. The man now remained permanently nearby, in life as in death, since in Çatal Höyük men were thoroughly integrated into domestic life. But this man would not have been a husband or “progenitor” of her descendants, since he would have played no role in her mother line and mother-house. Instead, he was most likely her brother, the nearest male relative in the matrilineal clan, who belonged to her house and motherline.

In matriarchal societies, as mother’s brother the man shares responsibility for his sister’s children and is their “social father” (in our terminology the “maternal uncle”). As a brother he plays a complementary role in the household economy, and in most cases, it is the oldest mother’s brother who represents the household and the kin group externally.[87] The man who was honored in Çatal Höyük by being buried as an ancestor in the house was probably such a highly respected person. In this respect, there was no “head of household” and also no “mistress of the house,” but rather the sister-brother pair, which in matriarchal societies, at the social level, is seen as the model for mutual support and egalitarian cooperation.[88]

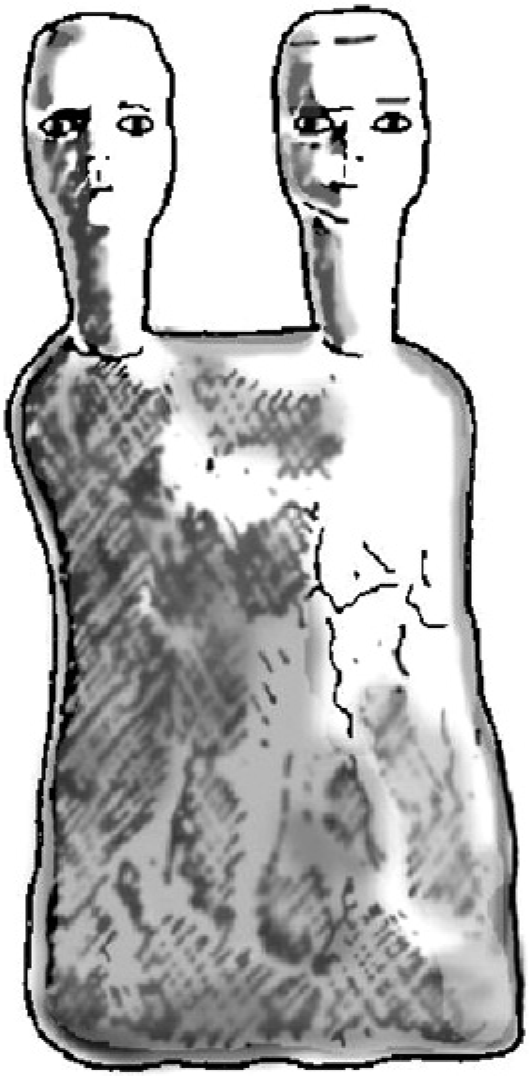
In addition, in contemporary matriarchal societies, besides other patterns there is also the so-called “visiting marriage.” The current love partner or husband visits the woman only for the night, just as her brothers spend the night with their love partners in another house. In other words, men do not live permanently with the women unless they are blood relatives.[89] Perhaps this also applied to the people of Çatal Höyük. Whatever the form taken by amorous relationships, essentially no-one in this egalitarian society could deprive either of the sexes of their free choice of partners. This choice was also transitory, unlike kinship relationships, and thus “paternity” in our sense was unknown. Furthermore, there was no need for it, as the “paternal” tasks in matriarchal societies are carried out by the mother’s brother who is also considered as the closest male relative of his sister’s children, because he has the same kinship name as her children.[90] It is all ←115 | 116→just a different concept of “father” than our own concept, so back projections of our concept of biological fatherhood are unacceptable here.

This also applies to the statement of a more recent excavator in Çatal Höyük, who noted that these burials singled out those the group honored the most, the “leaders” of the lineage. As this treatment was equally customary for men and women, he concluded that relationships were traced both through female and male lineages.[91] It should be noted, firstly, that, in a hierarchical sense, such “leaders” did not exist, and secondly, a double kinship line cannot be deduced from the evidence either. Male elders do not prove a “male line” in the sense of a father line, nor does the honoring of these persons. Again, the role of the man as mother’s brother within a matrilineal clan is not understood and confused with the man’s role in patrilineal societies and thereby seriously distorting the picture.[92] However, in matriarchal societies it is normal for the oldest woman, as mother of the clan, and her brother, as the oldest man as speaker for the clan, to enjoy great esteem. The younger generation’s respect for elders as advisors and integrating authorities can be observed in contemporary societies of this type in general. Such status does not mean, however, that there was no equality, because elders of either gender had no enforcement staff: no-one was in a position to demand obedience and rule over others.

In Çatal Höyük it is clearly visible that the oldest women enjoyed great esteem, especially if they had been the clan’s founders or priestesses. Reflecting this, women painted with ochre were found under the floors of religious rooms, especially where murals were found. Beneath the floor of the largest religious room, which contained a painting of the town itself, there was a grave with symbolically rich grave goods where a woman was buried who must have had great significance for the inhabitants—without this being evidence for any “leader.”[93]

Iconography provides even more indications for the development of the mother line in the Neolithic societies of West Asia. Appearing widely throughout the Fertile Crescent and Anatolia, female double figurines have been found, a curious form of representation, which continued into Europe.[94] The first were ←116 | 117→two-headed figures, where two female heads emerged from a single block, as if growing from a single root. Some examples are:

- several large and small examples of two-headed figurines from the city Άin Ghazal (7th millennium, Jordania) (Series A, Fig. a);
- a marble two-headed figure with two sets of breasts, but emerging from a single block, from Çatal Höyük (7th millennium, Central Anatolia) (Series A, Fig. b);
- a two-headed abstract disk-like figure in alabaster, found in Kültepe (3rd millennium, Central Anatolia) (Series A, Fig. c);
- a two-headed figure with only one pair of breasts from the Vinça culture (5th millennium, South Rumania) (Series A, Fig. d).



A/a

Fig. Series A/a: Large and small examples of two-headed female figurines (ʹAin Ghazal)

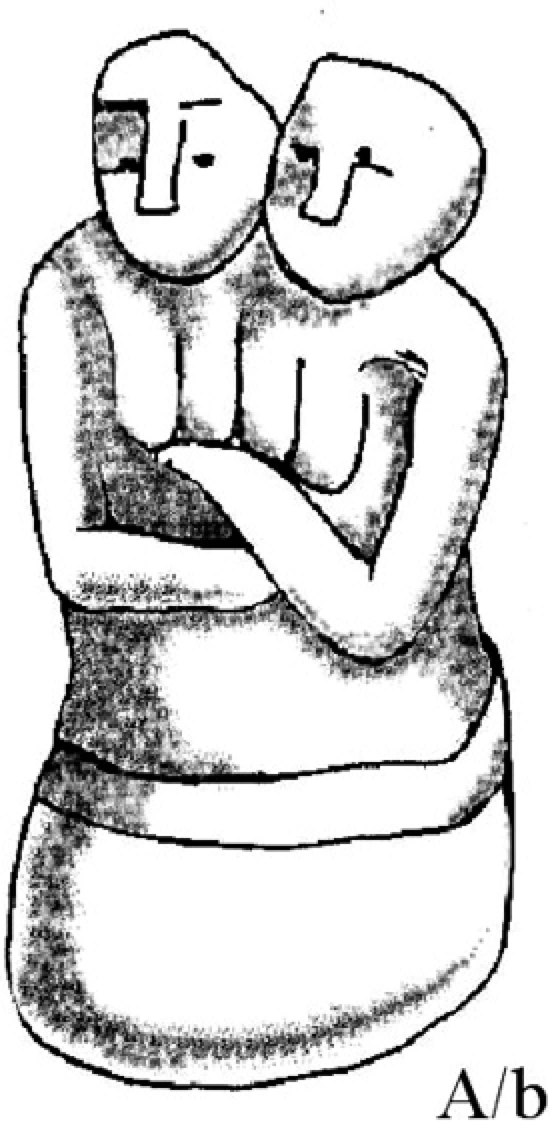
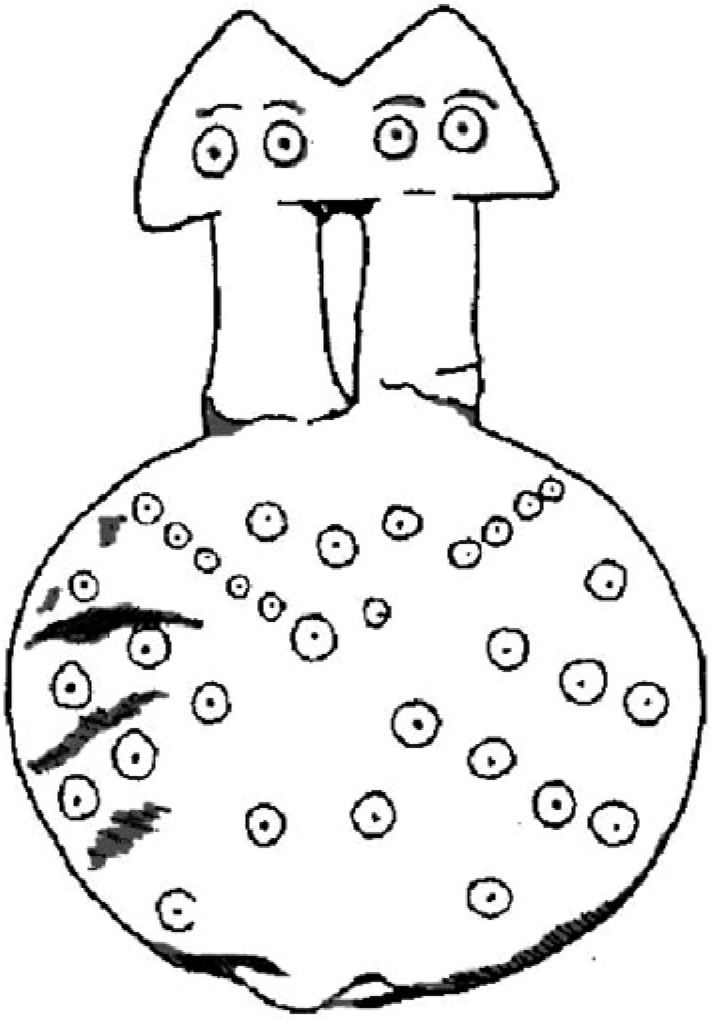
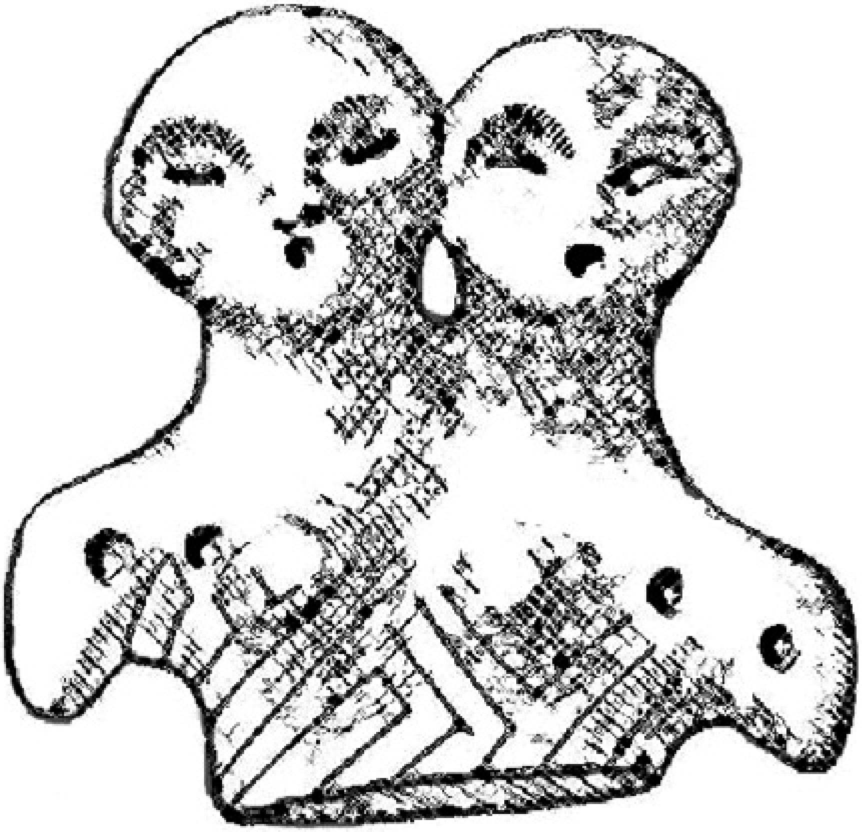


Fig. Series A/b: Two-headed female figure with two sets of breasts (Çatal Höyük)



A/c

Fig. Series A/c: Two-headed abstract disk-like female figure (Kültepe)



A/d

Fig. Series A/d: Two-headed female figure with only one pair of breasts (Vinça-Kultur)

Female double figurines also occur side by side, not two-headed, but completely alike. For example:

- five miniatures of hammered gold, each with two identical women, found in Alaca Höyük (3rd millennium, Central Anatolia) (Series A, Fig. e).

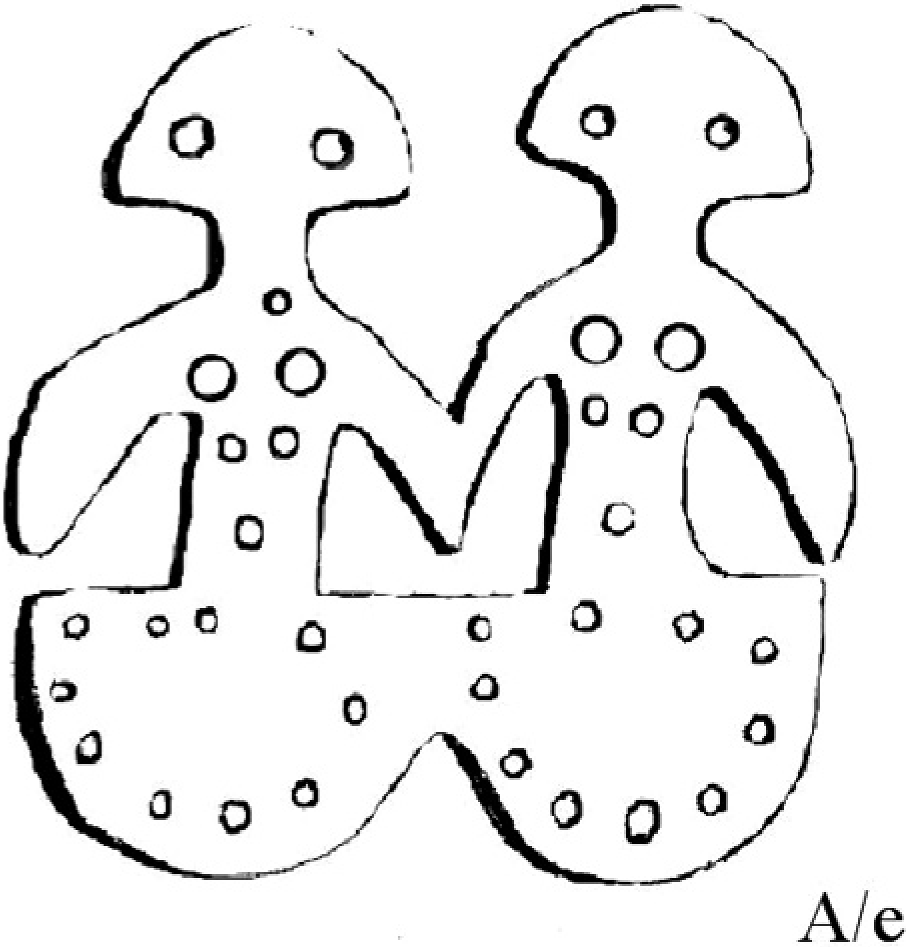
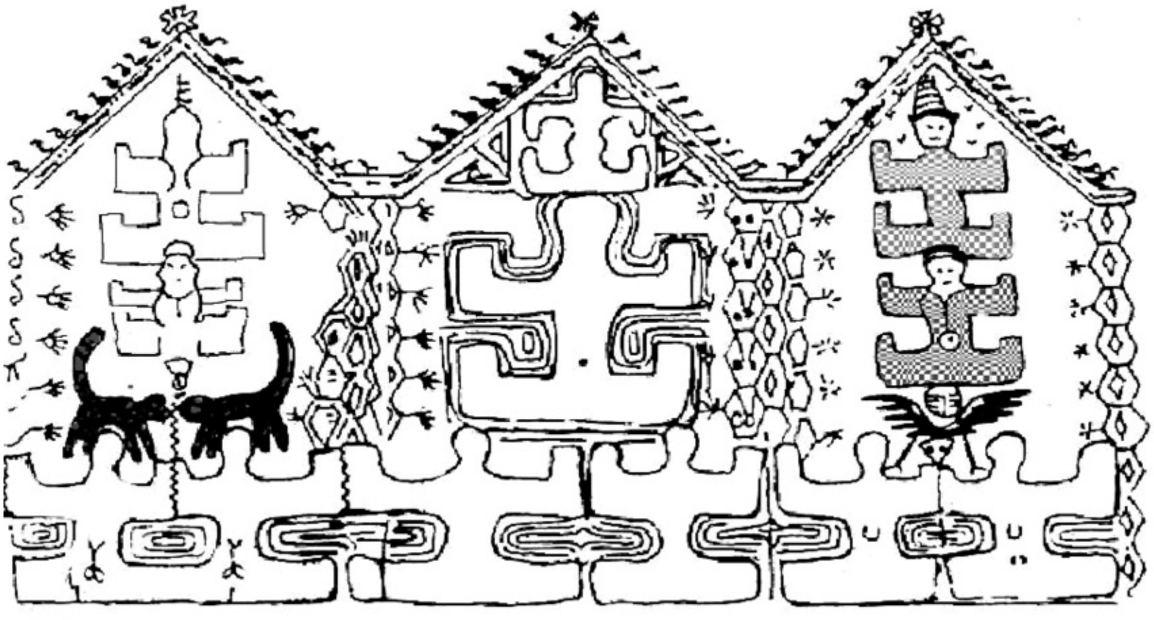


Fig. Series A/e: Miniature of two identical women (Alaca Höyük)

The wide distribution and enormously long prevalence of this motif shows that it expressed something important, and that even with its variations it had a fixed meaning. Many have speculated about the meaning of the figurines without considering the relevant cultural context, which is the Neolithic social order. In terms of this, the meaning becomes clearer. Most probably they were representations of the mother-daughter pair, with its crucial role in the formation of a mother line based on mother-daughter sequence.

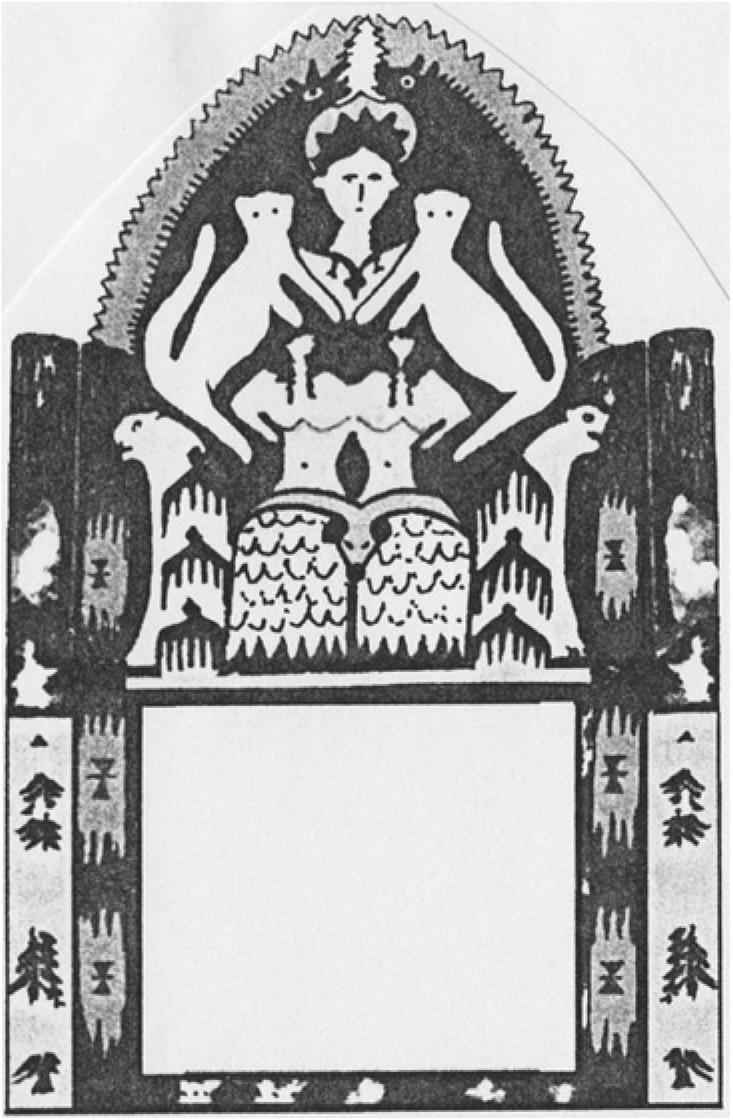
←117 | 118→←118 | 119→Looking for further support in Neolithic iconography for this interpretation, we can see that the repertoire of images also includes pairs of female figurines with one situated over, under, or within the other, as in these examples:

- three aligned double figures, all in identical birthing posture, the lower figures emerging from the upper as with daughters being born by mothers; on the bottom, the same schematic figure, in the same position, appears in a row of six, as if the daughter generation had doubled itself; fresco from Çatal Höyük (Series A, Fig. f);
- a grand lady with two leopards, below her two women as daughters, who are arranged as a continuation of the mother's figure (Series A, Fig. g);
- the same motif, though simplified and highly schematized, in three eye figurines from Tell Brak (3rd millennium, North Syria); two show a little daughter figure inside the mother figure, and with the third, the little figure has emerged, as if grown upwards from her; (Series A, Fig h);
- the same idea clearly depicted in a marble figure from the Cyclades Islands (3rd millennium, Greek Aegean Sea); the smaller female figure stands on the head of the larger female, with the two forming a line: the mother line (Series A, Fig i).



A/f

Fig. Series A/f: Fresco with three double figures in birthing posture (Çatal Höyük)



A/g

Fig. Series A/g: Fresco with grand lady, two daughters, and two leopards (Çatal Höyük)

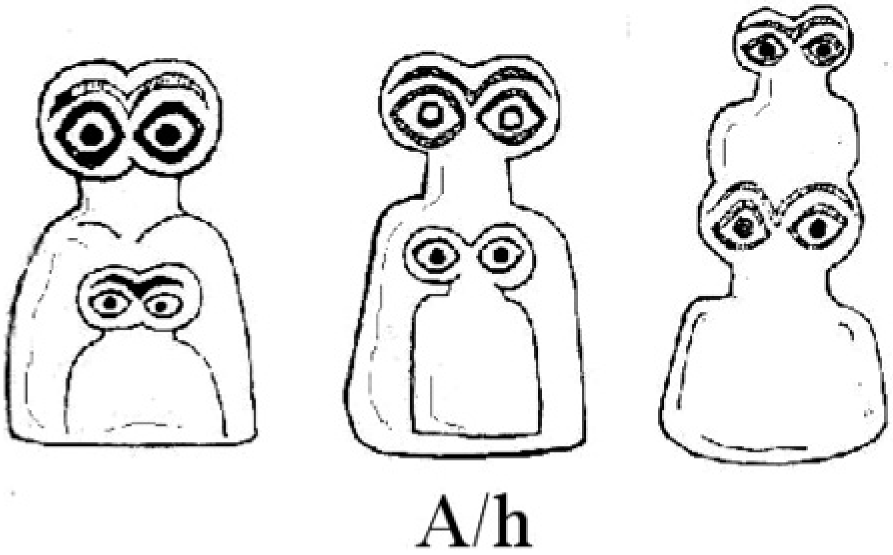
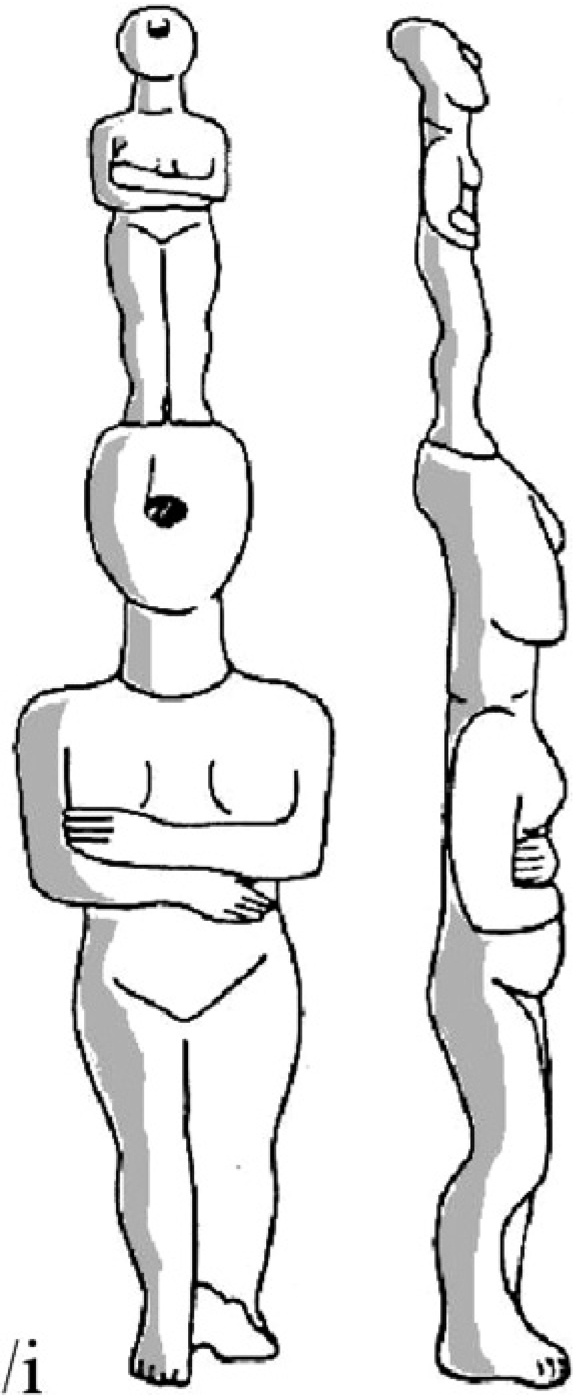


Fig. Series A/h: Three eye figurines (Tell Brak)



A/i

Fig. Series A/i: Smaller female figure with a larger female, side view and front view (Cyclades)

←119 | 120→The motif was thus realized in various ways in the art of different Neolithic cultural regions. This kind of sculptural and pictorial artifacts continued to be numerous throughout the millennia in West Asia and Europe and, dating from these early epochs, they have been found all over the world.[95] Everywhere they ←120 | 121→express the same thing: the recognition and development of the mother line, a social and cultural fact of extreme importance. There is nothing comparable for male figurines.

In Europe the motif was carried forward in both sculptural forms (Vinça culture, see above) and abstract forms. For example:

- on several megalith stones in the great passage tomb of Gavrinis (4th millennium, Brittany, France); here the arching growth motifs proliferating upward, each having a small vulva-like opening below, represent the growth of the mother line; arching growth motifs to the side show side branches of the same line; on the margins the female line reproducing itself is graphically repeated (Series A, Fig. j);
- on the right side of a megalith stone from the tomb of New Grange (4th millennium, Ireland); here the same abstract motif returns, transformed and less clear; but we still can see how female arches grow out of the central cartouches in all directions (Series A, Fig. k).←121 | 122→

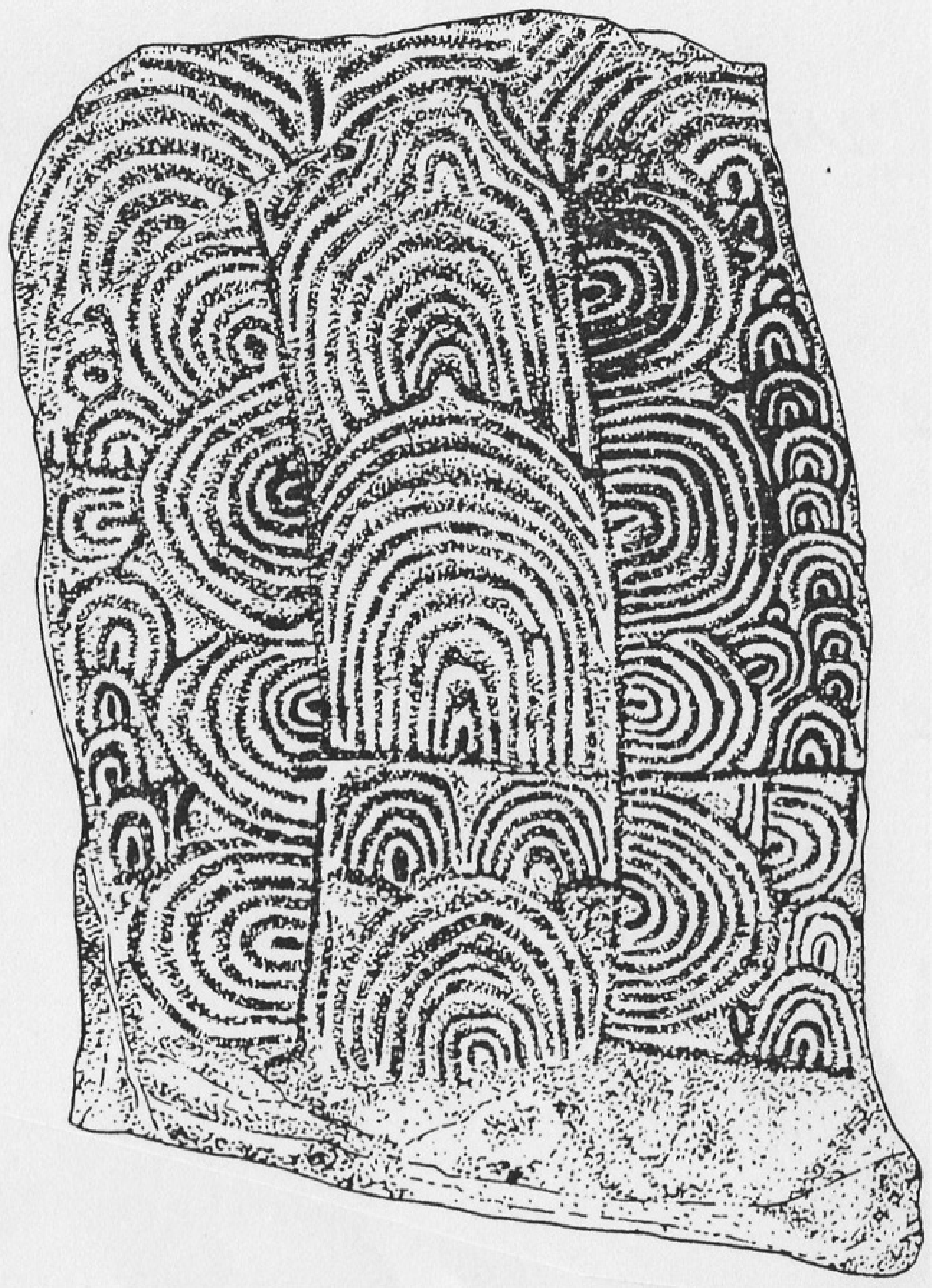


Fig. Series A/j: Engravings on megalithic stone, Gavrinis tomb (Brittany)

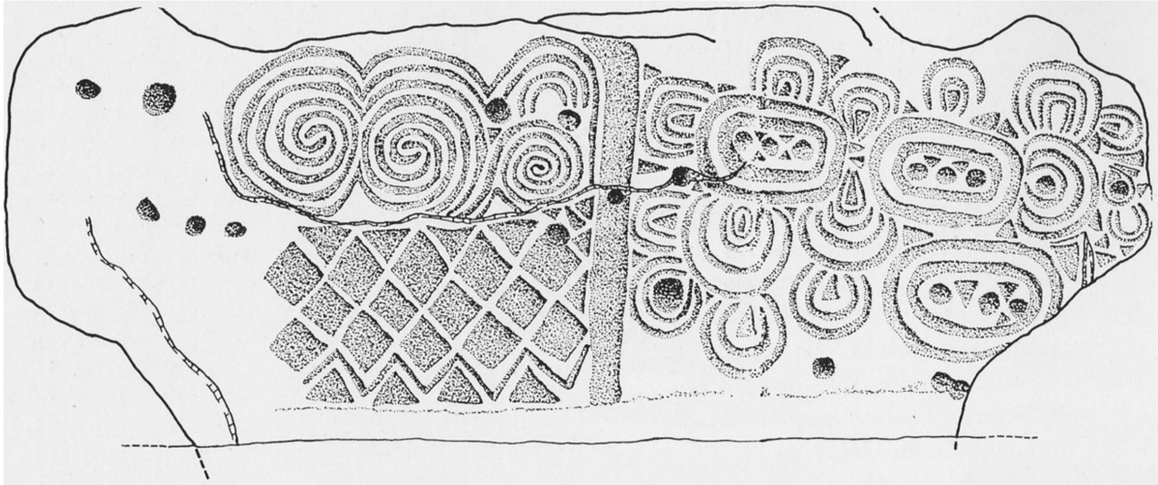


Fig. Series A/k: Engravings on megalithic stone, tomb of New Grange (Ireland) (Series A, Fig. a, b, c, f, g, h, i, drawings by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after Vicki Noble, Eve Kimberley; Fig. d, drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after Gimbutas; Fig. e, drawing by the author after Gimbutas; Abb. j, k in: Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 225, 238)

The motif of the mother-daughter pair as an expression of female genealogy lasted for thousands more years, as can be seen in the famous duo Demeter and Kore in ancient Greece. The religion of the goddess Demeter drew on ancient matriarchal roots, and it points clearly to the mother line that prevailed in pre-patriarchal Greece.

←122 | 123→

Discovering and developing female genealogy or matrilineality was one of women's most important cultural achievements in the Neolithic epoch. With it, for the first time, they conceptualized the idea of a familial relationship, in this case as blood relations. The term "blood relations" originated in the belief that a child was solely made from the menstrual blood of a woman not shed during the months of pregnancy.[96] With matrilineality, which integrated both sexes into the blood relations of the mother line, women provided a new structure for Neolithic communities and society as a whole. All groupings were also held together in an egalitarian way by means of these relationships. Every member understood the duties and rights she or he possessed within the clan or vis-à-vis other clans in the kinship group’s web of relationships.

Archaeological findings also support this. Long-term settlements consisted of specific groups of houses that belonged together and formed segments. One location could contain four or more such segments, and archaeologists assume these households belonged to a single related group, or clan. Characteristically, such segments were more or less equal in size, and the settlement was laid out in a symmetrical pattern. This is very clear in Çatal Höyük, where these groups of houses made up equal segments, and the entire city was divided into balanced northern and southern halves.[97] That is to say, blood relationships structured every village and city through complex horizontal interconnections. This created a *matrilineal kinship society*, which was a system of mutual aid, and hindered the emergence of a central power—as is also seen in the interconnectedness of matrilineal clans in matriarchal societies today. These relational networks represent a far more complex and dynamic form of social organization than those found in vertically organized, hierarchical societies. Their dynamism comes from intensive interaction and cooperation, since the balance between all segments of society needs to be constantly reaffirmed in the face of change. In other words, it is not simply given, and most certainly not “primitive,” but rather calls for a high degree of social competence.

At the same time, archaeological findings also reveal that people, over generations, often built new houses on top of old ones. When a house was vacated, the upper walls were demolished and used as infill for the lower part in order to rebuild the new house on the old walls. This continued for centuries, so that the settlement hills (“tells”) grew higher and higher, as in Çatal Höyük, for example, ←123 | 124→where they were 21 m high.[98] What was the reason for this at a time when there was plenty of land available? This practice reveals “social memory,” an adherence to the ways of life of one’s ancestors, which guaranteed social continuity for the descendants. Thus, when necessary, a similar daughter-house was built above the mother-house out of respect for the place of the ancestress. The bones of the dead lay under the old houses, making them sacred places that were not abandoned. In this way, daughter-houses grew upward out of the older mother-houses, as depicted in the abstract growth patterns on the megalith stones of Gavrinis (see Series A, Fig. j). This demonstrates that now, in the development of matrilineal relationships, the whole *series of female ancestors* was included, the long chain leading from the past into the present. In this way, through the history of the clan, a new awareness of the past had begun, starting with the first ancestress.

This type of construction did not alter the settlement structure because it was a manifestation of the complex structure of the clans. It was strictly maintained as the basis for the entire kinship-based society. This did not mean that everything had to remain the same inside the houses. Changes to house plans can be seen throughout the various archaeological layers. The allocation of inner space could be altered or completely rearranged; entrances were moved, rooms re-divided; some houses became smaller, others larger. This reveals a constantly renewed ordering of details to adjust the houses to the changing situations of the clans, which could grow or shrink. Sometimes old houses were abandoned and new ones built. This probably happened, when a kinship group died out and the house deteriorated, or when inner conflicts were resolved by relocation. In this way, new house groupings were established.[99] Individual clans thus rearranged themselves flexibly within firm community structures.[100]

Another cause of new construction was fire, which occurred frequently. In that case the destroyed houses or segments were rebuilt on the old foundations. It is particularly interesting that there are no examples of towns burnt and completely destroyed by war, as reconstruction has never been seen for an entire city. ←124 | 125→No archaeological evidence for massacres, wars, or defensive fortifications exists for these epochs.[101]

Neolithic Culture and Religion in West Asia: Early Religious Wealth

Symbolism of Life and Death

The megalithic temples and community buildings were meeting places, but also especially served religious purposes, and, indeed, the two cannot be separated. Their often rich, symbolic decoration attests to this. From the beginning, one driving force for the community's social coherence was the religious festival, where the community consumed the game from hunting and any surplus from farming and distributed gifts of material goods.[102] This was already evident in Hallan Çemi, where inhabitants still lived primarily by hunting and gathering (11th millennium). The central plaza was covered with animal bones, some partially connected and with a few skulls lined up, indicating that the game from hunting was displayed before being communally consumed. Archaeologists also found decorated stone bowls and pestles, indicating that plant products were also consumed.[103] This was no different in later communal buildings, where stores of animal bones were also found.[104] It is thought that the community gathered together primarily to celebrate the dead.

These feasts were not only to honor the dead, but also to affirm that they would be reborn after death according to beliefs of the rebirth religion. This foundational religious approach to confronting the problem of death had already been pivotal for the Palaeolithic Era, and it continued to develop in the Neolithic epochs. The symbolism of Hallan Çemi is early proof: here the skull of a broad-horned aurochs was found in a public building, where it had probably been hanging on a wall.[105] Such bull horns were also found in other early settlements. These were not a symbol of "male fertility"—a popular, but ideological misconception—but continued the Palaeolithic's hundreds of millennia-long symbolic connection between the bull and the moon. The moon with its phases marked the passage of time and was the basis for the first calendar. It is relevant that the first, partially sunken communal buildings also served astronomical purposes.[106] Likewise, the moon stands for eternal transformation by waxing, becoming full, waning, and returning, and is thus an ancient symbol for a religion of rebirth.

Two more symbolic animals appear in reliefs on the stone slabs of community buildings: birds of prey, two of these even as fully formed sculptures (Jerf el Ahmar, Nemrik), and panthers or leopards (Tell Abr).[107] Their frequency and predominance in the iconography of the West Asian Neolithic period tells us they must have had a deep and generally familiar meaning. Raptors, especially vultures, were symbols of death. Among the vulture images are schematic human figures without heads (Jerf el Ahmar, Çatal Höyük); this refers to the custom of setting out the dead for vultures to clean their bones ("excarnation") (Fig. 2), after the heads had been removed and buried separately. The corpses were not simply placed outdoors, but in designated places, as shown in the depiction of an airy, roofless reed house containing human bones, which should be understood as an "excarnation house" (Çatal Höyük).[108] In a final step, the de-fleshed skeletons were thoroughly cleaned, sometimes decorated, and buried with honor.

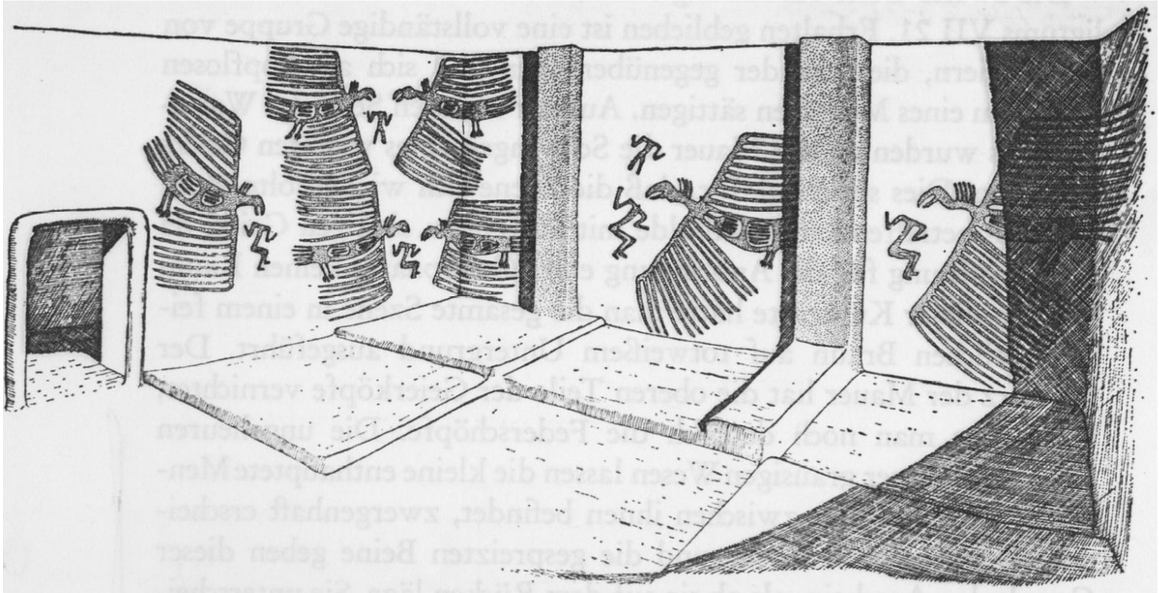


Fig. 2: Religious room with paintings of vultures, northern and eastern walls of the house VII, 8 (Çatal Höyük)

The panther or leopard, as opposed to the vulture, was obviously a symbol of life. The catlike agility, stamina, and fecundity of these animals already support this interpretation, but, beyond that, panthers or leopards are usually depicted in connection with women.

As examples, three female figures from Çatal Höyük alone can be mentioned:

- a seated woman holding two leopard cubs in her arms (Series B, Fig. a);
- a second, very famous figure representing a woman giving birth on a leopard throne (Series B, Fig b);
- a third woman, wrapped in a leopard skin, sits cross-legged, meditating (Series B, Fig. c).

Other meaningful female figures come from Hacılar:

- ←126 | 127→two women are each holding a child in their arms (Series B, Fig. d, e);
- two others sit on leopards, one of them is presenting her breasts (Series B, Fig. f);
- the other one is pressing a leopard cub against her breast like a child (Series B, Fig. g).

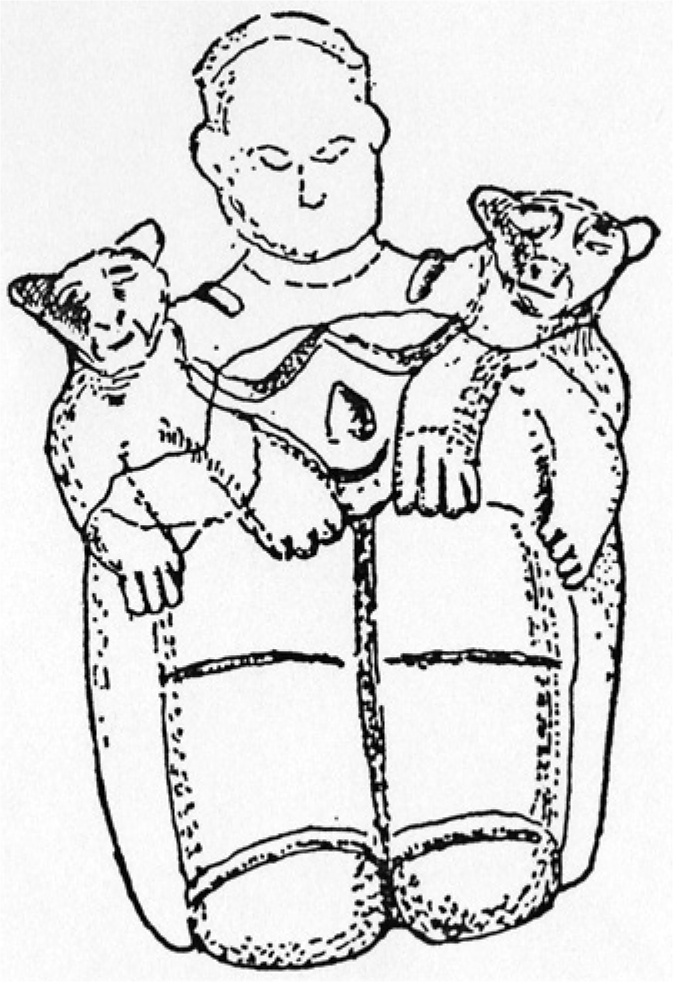


Fig. Series B/a: Seated female figure with two leopard cubs (Çatal Höyük)

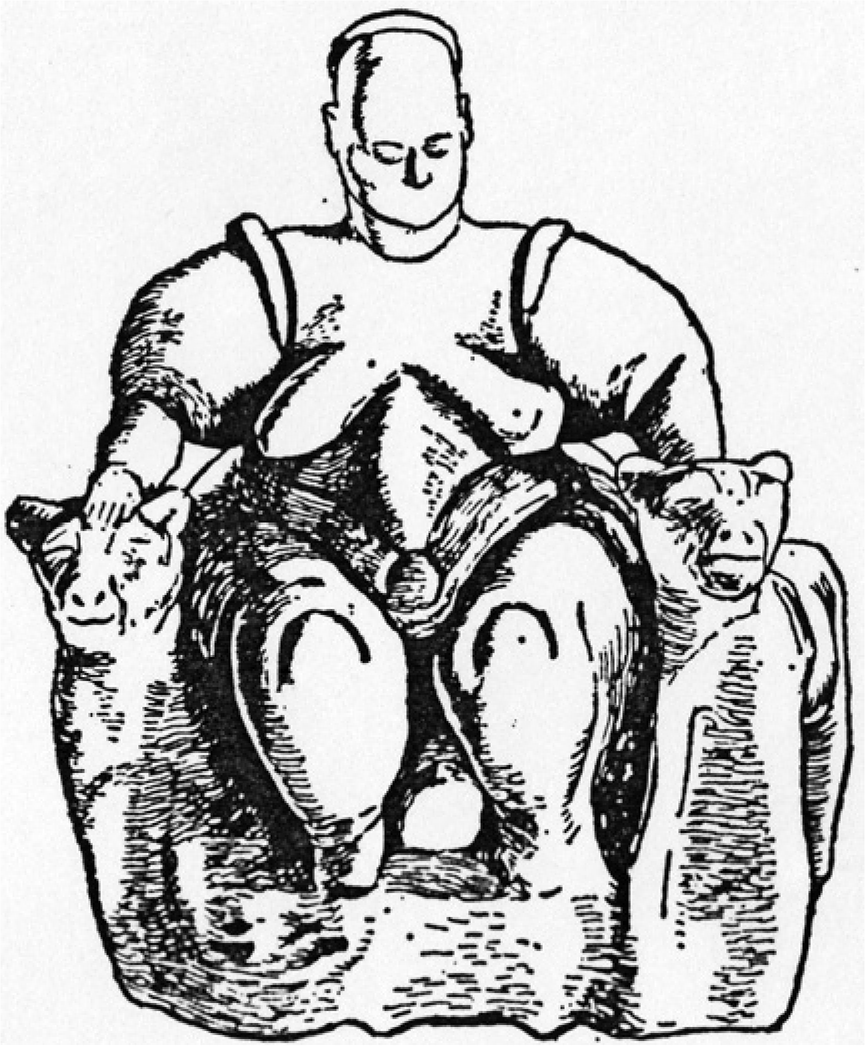


Fig. Series B/b: Female figure on a leopard throne (Çatal Höyük)

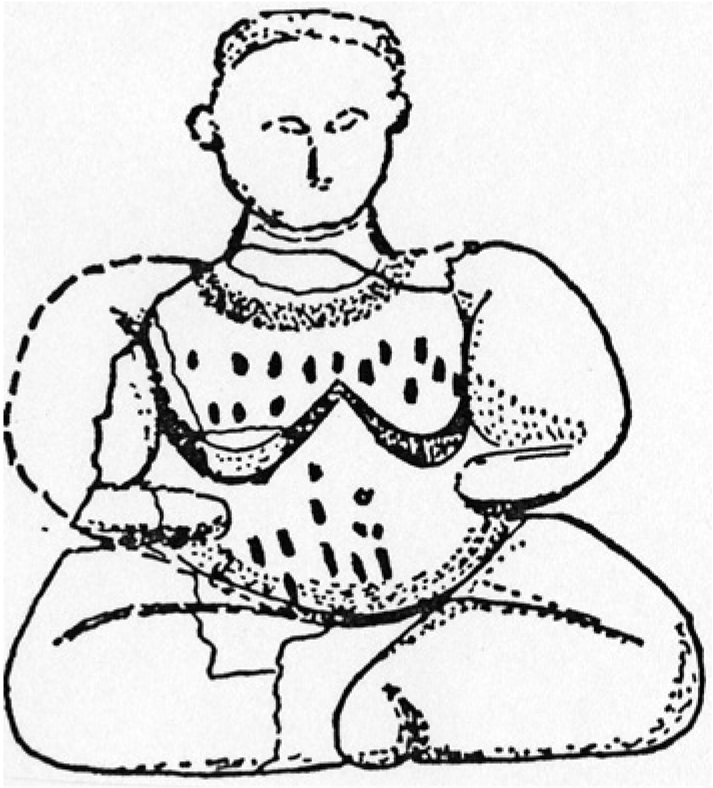


Fig. Series B/c: Female figure meditating in a leopard skin (Çatal Höyük)

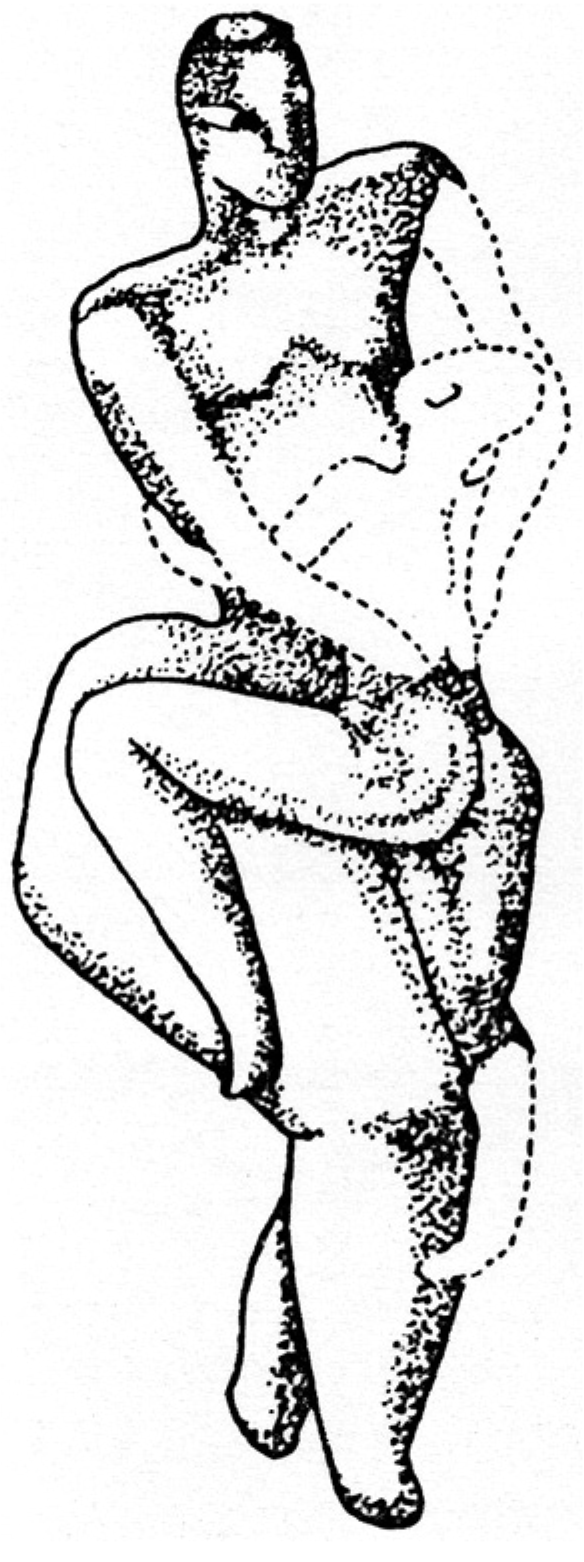


Fig. Series B/d: Female figure holding a child (Hacılar)

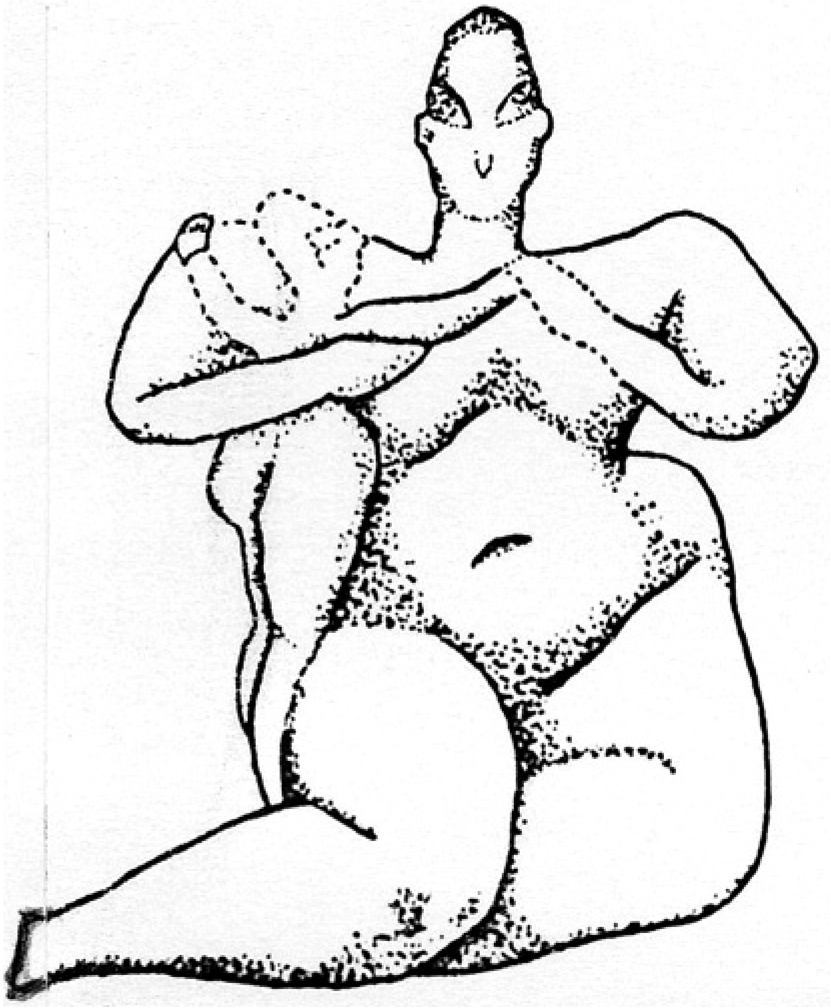
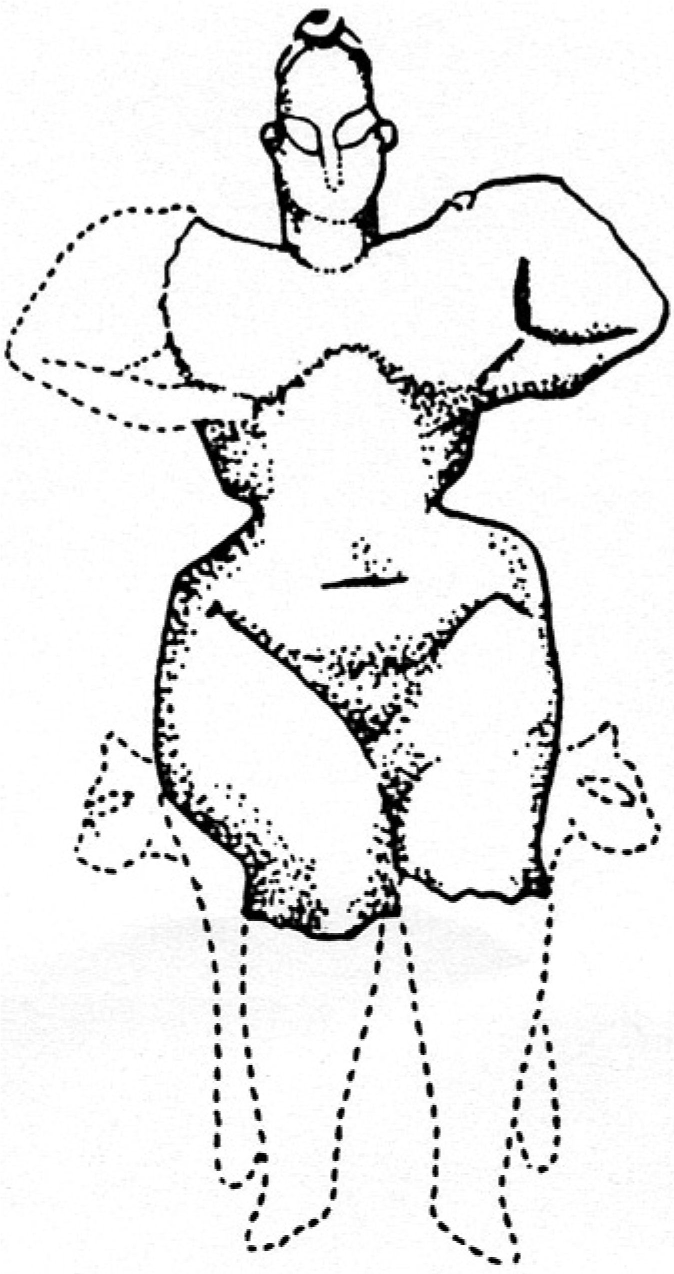


Fig. Series B/e: Seated female figure holding a child (Hacılar)



ig. Series B/f: Female figure on two leopards presenting her breasts Hacılar)

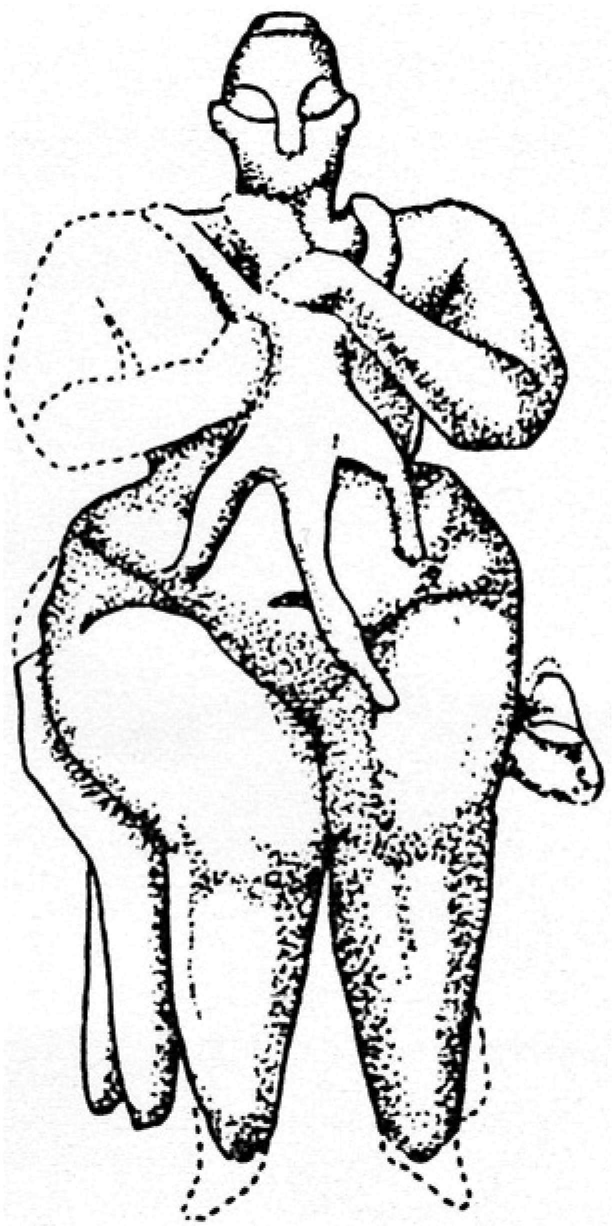


Fig. Series B/g: Female figure on a leopard holding a leopard cub (Hacılar)

Real women obviously cannot do these things with leopards, which is why these figures must be understood as highly symbolic: they express the female power to give life, represented by the leopard as a symbol.

←127 | 128→←128 | 129→←129 | 130→

This symbolism began very early (Nemrik, 11th millennium, Jerf el Ahmar and Tell Abr, 10th millennium) and was fully developed in the late Pottery Neolithic (Çatal Höyük and

Hacılar, 8th/7th millennium). Its long duration is testament to its great significance for the people of that time.

In the earliest megalithic temples on the hill of Göbekli Tepe (10th/9th millennium) and in the town of Nevalı Çori (9th/8th millennium), with their impressive grandiosity, the symbolism is similar in some respects. In Göbekli Tepe, imagery with many animals was applied to the T-pillars in the form of reliefs, with vultures and panthers/leopards prominent among them. For example, a vulture, larger and more active than all the other animals, is depicted on the richly decorated pillar 43. It seems to be directing events; and in the right lower corner of the pillar there is, not by chance, a small schematic man without a head.[109] In the so-called “Lion Pillar building” two panthers with bared teeth dominate the two central pillars; these are the only reliefs from the later building phase.[110]

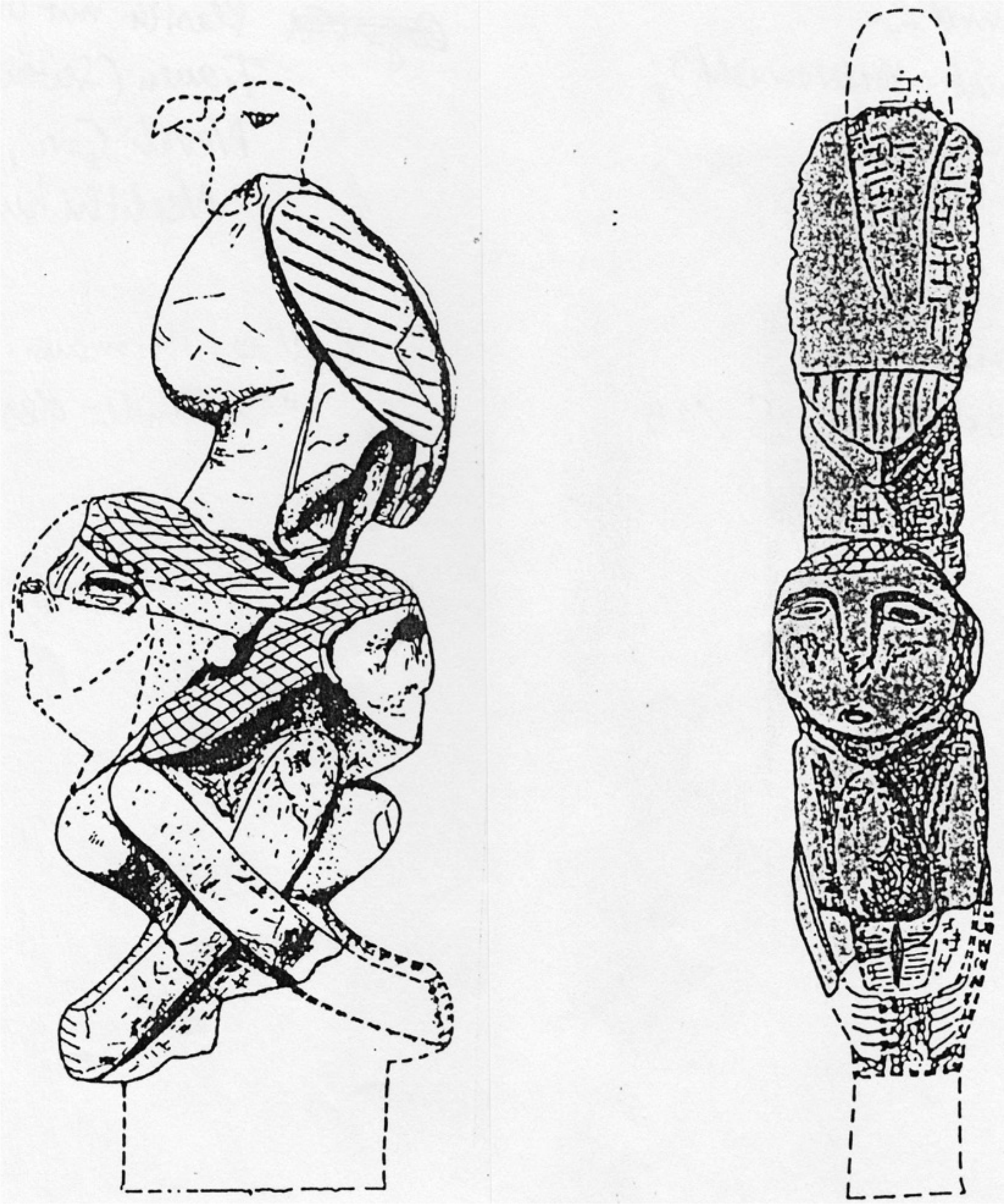
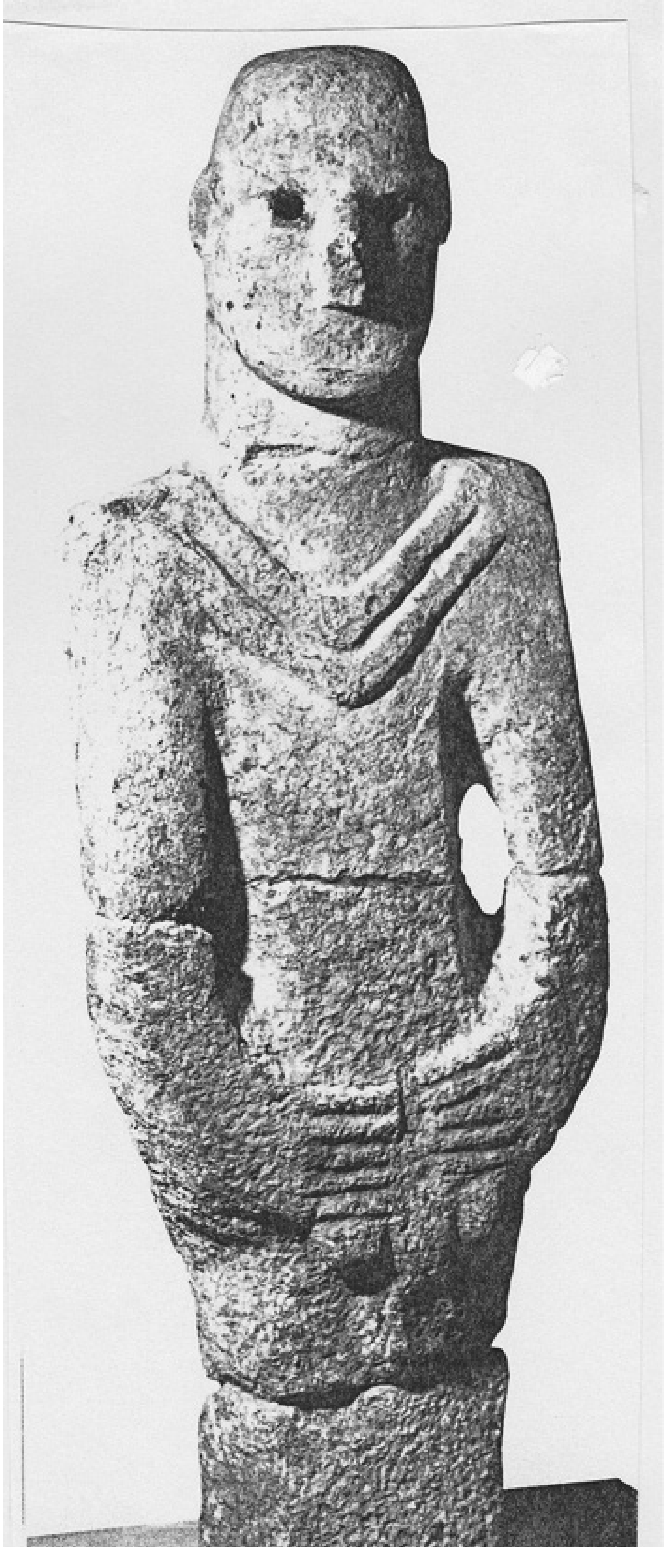


Fig. 3: Sculpture with vulture and two women, so-called “totem pole,” side view and front view (Nevalı Çori)

The symbolism of life and death becomes clearer in Nevalı Çori. In its temple a 1-m sculpture was found on which, like a totem pole, the motifs are arranged one above the other (Fig. 3). A large raptor, probably a vulture, occupies the highest position; it is sitting on the heads of two women with long hair held in a net, as suggested by hatched lines. The women embrace each other back-to-back, with their hands reaching back around each other toward the other's vulva, suggested by a cleft. Their position reminds us of later Sheela-na-gig figures displaying their vulvas. The sculpture clearly refers to the symbolism of life and death. Death, symbolized by the vulture, is overcome through rebirth from the woman; her vulva is the gateway to new life. This artwork is a direct link to the frequent Palaeolithic-Era vulva symbols, carrying their meaning onward through time, since the ancient rebirth religion still held sway. The same arrangement appears again in another sculpture from Nevalı Çori: it shows a beautifully sculpted woman's head with netted hair, and once again a raptor with pronounced vulture talons is seated upon it.[111] Although the column is only preserved in fragments, ←130 | 131→ the same arrangement of vulture and woman hardly allows for any interpretation other than, again, the theme of death and rebirth. These artistic sculptures and their subject matter were in no way incidental, but probably stood as religious images at the center of the town's sanctuary.

The Polarity of Female and Male

In Urfa, near Nevalı Çori, a 2-m statue was found that depicted the simple form of a man. The figure is nude and the face schematic, without individual features. He wears a double, V-shaped ornament around his neck, which directs the gaze downward where, with both hands pressed against his body, he displays his phallus (Fig. 4). Similar phallic figures, though smaller, were also found in Göbekli Tepe, along with other phallic objects.[112] However, it would be wrong to conclude that this suggests the beginnings of male dominance or the sudden appearance ←131 | 132→ of the individual "Big Man" on the historic stage, or some kind of "phalloracy." Such phallus-like objects were already found in the Palaeolithic Era with its egalitarian life forms; compared with the numerous vulva representations, they were very rare.[113] In subsequent millennia these “ithyphallic” figures were also popular; for instance, they still occurred in ancient Greece, as in the Hermes steles.



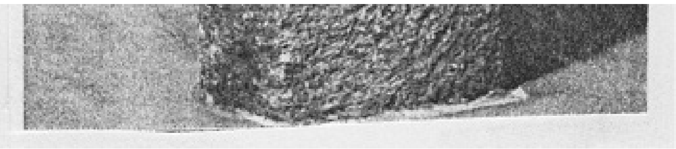


Fig. 4: Male sculpture from Urfa (Southeast Turkey)

The significance of these findings was already wildly exaggerated with regard to the Palaeolithic Era. Based on a few phallic representations, it was first claimed that "the biological basis of reproduction was known," and, second, that "sexual magic" was part of initiation rites.[114] Both claims have also been made for the Neolithic, but are extremely dubious. To the second claim one could reply that traditional sexual customs, practiced with the same frequency as all other customs, would have left behind large numbers of phallic objects as they would be as revered as the vulva–but this is not the case. Even more unacceptable are claims ←132 | 133→that recognition of a male role in pregnancy was given, which simultaneously introduced the concept of the biological "father" or even the "father line." That is male wishful thinking from our present time, and was highly unlikely, if only due to women's free and frequently changing choices of sexual partners in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Eras.

We are also dealing here with a one-sided biological view that fundamentally refuses to understand that Stone Age depictions of women were not about sexuality and reproduction, but about the rebirth religion. Even for representations specifically emphasizing the phallus, like the statue of Urfa, we need to pay attention to the religious context. The statue does not demonstrate a "fertility cult" because Stone Age humans were not concerned with mere fertility, but with returning to life from death. More precisely: it was about the rebirth of the female and male ancestors from the Otherworld beyond back into this world. The ancestor concept was formed along with the development of genealogy, leading to ancestor worship (the so-called "ancestor cult"). These were seen as the other part of the clan, lingering in the Otherworld and distributing blessings from there. When they wished, they returned by being born as children into their own kinship group. Therefore, children could not originate from men, but were sent by the ancestral spirits. Each woman who wanted to become pregnant received an ancestral soul directly from the Otherworld and, during pregnancy, made it flesh with her own blood. The true cause of each birth was thus thought to be the reincarnation wish of an ancestral soul; this is a non-biological, spiritual conception of birth that can still be seen today among indigenous peoples.[115] Also in the European cultural sphere, many traditional sayings and customs still remain that reflect this belief, such as “fetching children” from ancestral stones, soul ponds and soul mountains, from springs and wells, and from Otherworld islands. Later epochs still have throwbacks to this ancient belief, which was once broadly held in all cultures.[116]

Within this belief framework, the understanding of men’s role differed from ours today. The matriarchal Trobriand Islanders (Melanesia), for example, believed that a lover merely opened the woman’s “gate” so an ancestral soul could enter. The woman had to seek out this soul herself by bathing in the sea at a time when there were a lot of leaves, twigs, or seaweed floating on the waves. There the ←133 | 134→tiny souls sat and waited for a woman who would receive them and give birth to them again. In Central Europe there is a similar myth of the Frau Holle pond on the mountain Meissner, where young women went on pilgrimage to bathe and receive a little soul.[117] Men as lovers were excluded from participating in an ancestor’s rebirth as a child because, in matrilineal clans, they did not carry the same clan name, and thus did not count as relatives. On the other hand, brothers were important, and a woman who wanted to conceive could ask her brother to bring her a jar of water with something floating in it from the sea or pond, for he was considered the closest male relative of his sister’s children.[118] Thus, in a spiritual sense, he was involved in the rebirth of the ancestors.

Whatever form these ideas took in the Stone Age, they were certainly not like ours. Just as certainly, ithyphallic figures had a religious context similar to the many vulva representations, but were not understood as sexual or biologistic. A key to better understanding comes from the many “yoni-lingam” representations still worshipped today in India, which originated in an ancient layer of culture. Yoni (vulva) and lingam (phallus) appear alone or together, and are always fixed components of popular religiosity. They have large spiritual content because they symbolize an important polarity of the world: the female-male polarity. Among indigenous matriarchal populations, the entire world is understood as polarities: heaven and earth, sun and moon, summer and winter, east and west, life and death, old and young, etc., and included in this, female and male, entailing no value judgments of one or the other side of a polarity. The poles are not understood as opposites in conflict; instead, each completes the other and they hold themselves in balance. From this the dynamic of the cosmos and the human world emerges. This worldview could be called a “polar cosmology.”[119] Matriarchal cultures see the female-male polarity as so fundamental they imagine the heavens are divided into male and female halves, and also identify female and male elements on earth, female and male mountains, water bodies, etc., and also divide the human world into male and female spheres. Here, too, no value judgments or gender definitions were implied, but these two halves of the world held each other dynamically in motion and balance.[120]

←134 | 135→The people of the Stone Age first created this worldview because it appears, explicitly or implicitly, in all later cultures. In Stone Age cultures, then, ithyphallic figures represented the other half of the female-male polarity and formed a part of this spiritual context. Extracting them from this and interpreting them one-sidedly can only lead to misinterpretations. There was a widespread ceremony celebrating the female-male polarity: the ritual of sacred marriage (“hieros gamos”), which was still present in later myths and had been preserved in popular customs and among indigenous peoples almost up to the present day.[121] This ritual never had anything to do with “sanctifying sexuality” in the sense of man’s procreative power nor with “pushing through the nuclear family, fatherhood and male dominance,” because it was by no means about “childbearing.” Such a conception is wrong and would be a crude distortion resulting from our later world view. Rather, it was a sacred ceremony in matriarchal societies, in the hot summer months often associated with rain magic.[122] It was highly symbolic, due to the belief that all cosmic and earthly polarities united lovingly within it so that the world would not fall apart, but remain in balance. The ritual of sacred marriage is age-old, as indicated by a sculpture representing a sexual union from the Natufian (Άin Sakhri, 11th millennium, Epipalaeolithic).[123] In the Neolithic, a sculpture was found in Çatal Höyük representing a couple in erotic embrace (7th millennium), certainly not depicting a private bedroom scene, or an act of procreation by a ruler.[124] In the 6th/5th millennium sacred marriage is documented by a rock drawing in the Latmos mountains (western Turkey) in which a sacred couple is seen at the center and smaller dancing or seated women to the right and left. This scene highlights the communal nature of the ceremony (Fig. 5). In Neolithic Europe there were further examples of this ritual, for example in the sculpture of an embracing couple in Rumania (Gumelniţa, 5th millennium).[125]

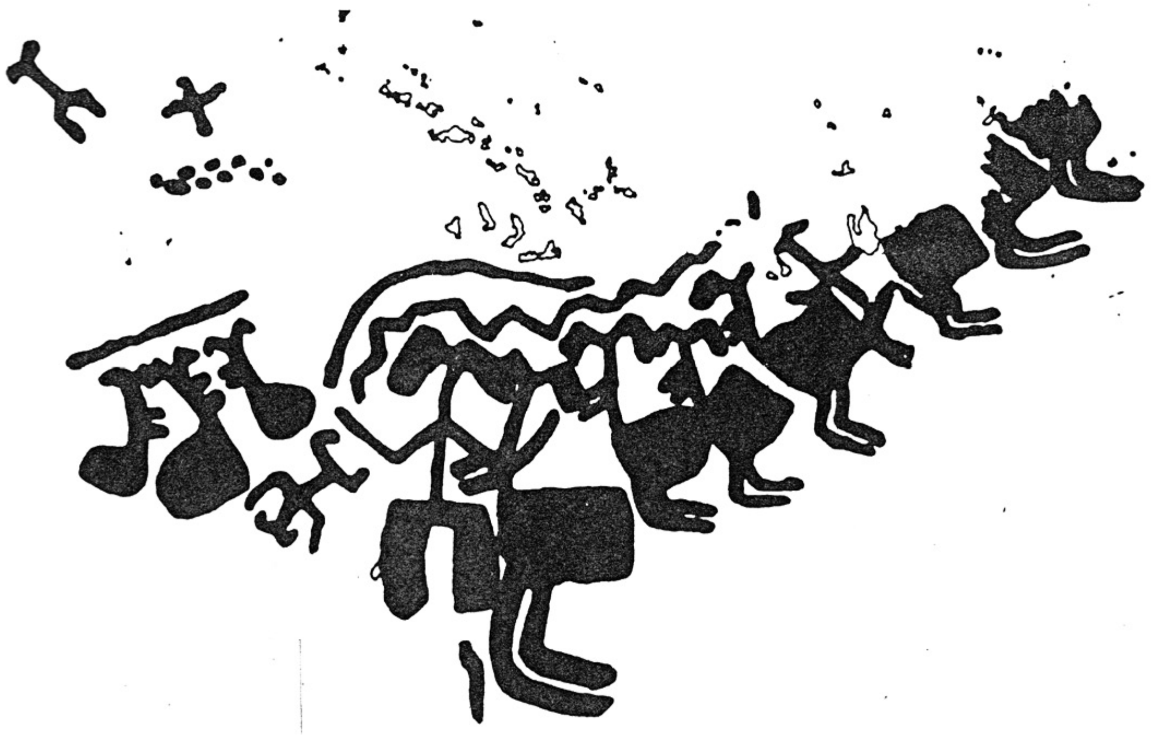


Fig. 5: Ritual of Sacred Marriage associated with rain magic, painted ceiling of Izikada Cave, Latmos Mountains (West Turkey)

A further, literally weighty indication that the Neolithic worldview was a polar cosmology is provided by the central T-pillars in the megalithic temples of Göbekli Tepe, Nevalı Çori, and other places. They always stand as a couple, and represent human beings, as can be seen in the thin bent arms engraved right and ←135 | 136→left in shallow relief. The mighty T-block represents the head, which is always protruding slightly toward the inner part of the building, quasi “gazing inward.” The central pair of pillars in area D of Göbekli Tepe reveals still more. On the narrow side, in front, they wear symbols like small pendants. Beneath an abstract sign, the eastern central pillar has a disc within an upward-pointing crescent, and the pillar to the west has a similarly located bull’s head with its horns turned downward (Fig. 6).[126] The meaning of these symbols is obvious, for the disc and upward-pointing crescent mean the sun (or full moon) and the waxing crescent moon. The full meaning is “light,” which fits with the pillar’s position in the east, where the heavenly bodies rise. Light is synonymous with “life,” and this is generally anchored in the symbolism of the East. The western central pillar looks toward the direction where the stars set, which is generally linked with “death.” The downward-turning horns of the small bull’s head seem to have this meaning, since together with the forehead they form a downward-pointing crescent. Since bulls’ horns are a fundamental component of moon symbolism, this represents the waning crescent moon, which soon “dies” by disappearing completely.

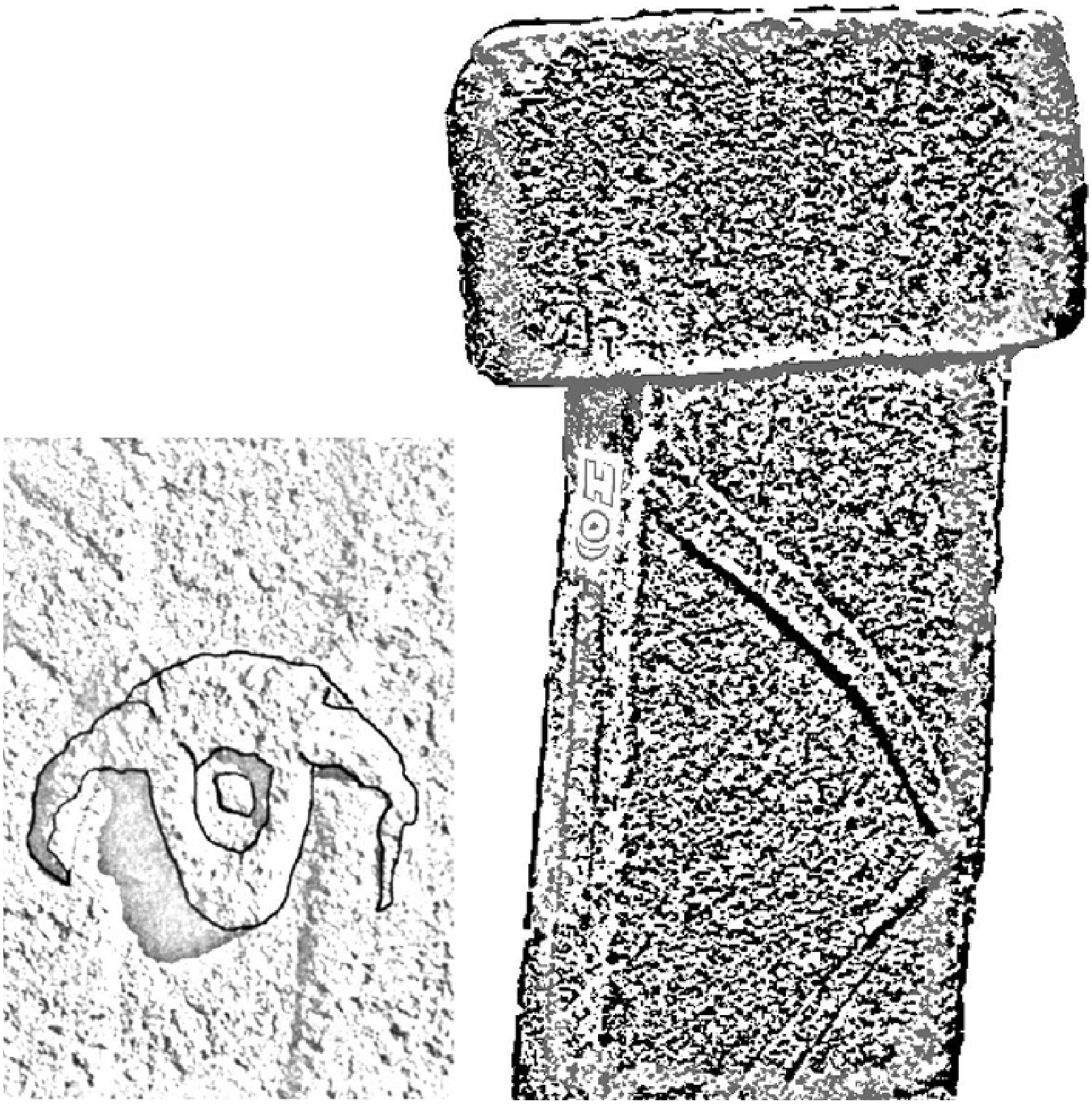


Fig. 6: Symbols on the central pair of pillars of temple D (Göbekli Tepe) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

The pair of pillars is thus a further variant of the polar symbolism of life and death which is widespread in this epoch. At the same time, it is linked to female-male polarity, although the pillars reveal no sexual characteristics. However, the female side was always associated with the East because the female is the life-giving ←136 | 137→power. The male side, on the other hand, was linked with the West and death because men as hunters bring death to the animal world. These thoughts go back to the elemental symbols of the Palaeolithic: vulva and arrow, which represent the same polarity of female equated with life and male equated with death. In the Neolithic this symbolism returned with greater complexity, and was lastingly built in stone, but the basic religious idea continued uninterrupted.

Female and Male Ancestors

The temples of Göbekli Tepe are often interpreted as an expression of the dominance of a male elite that constructed impressive monuments to itself and engaged in purely male religious practices. It is suggested that the size of the structures and the enormous number of mighty megalith pillars, whose construction seems unimaginable without a central organization, support this interpretation. The rich decoration of the inner, weight-bearing T-pillars, with reliefs showing animals with male sex organs, is cited as evidence for a cult of masculinity. As for the predators, they appear dangerously aggressive by showing their teeth, and the image of a bull has been interpreted as "battle-ready."[127]

←137 | 138→Implicit in all this remains the phantom of the "Big Man" as hunter who now, on the threshold from Palaeolithic to Neolithic, establishes a first monument to himself. Therefore, we will need to look more closely at the significance of these structures and ask two questions: Whom do the T-pillars represent? And what do the many different animals signify?

As said above these megalithic T-pillars bear no sexual characteristics. They stand in a circle around the inner space, and none seems more important than any other (see Fig. 1 of Chapter 3). In the rectangular religious structures such as those in Nevalı Çori, no T-pillar is marked as especially significant either. But in contrast to Göbekli Tepe, the latter are all provided with thin bent arms that show them to be human. The hands rest on the narrow front at the level of the genitals. This is the same gesture as the one seen in the vulture-women statue and the male statue of Urfa, but the genital area is not represented on the pillars (Fig. 7 a). Less ideologically-driven archaeologists have noted that this extreme stylization, the removal of every personal trait, is intentional, and suggests we are dealing here with beings from another world.[128] These are depictions of female and male ancestors from the Otherworld, a religious thought that first appeared here and lived on for many millennia in the megalith cultures of the entire world. Such megalith steles also exist in Europe, sometimes with faces, sometimes with sexual characteristics or other female and male attributes. This later development makes it clear what was always already meant.[129]

This is even clearer in the indigenous society of the Khasi (Northeast India), where megalith constructions were still being erected during the British colonial era. The Khasi explained the stones’ meaning directly to ethnologists: they viewed the prone dolmen-like stones—clearly in accordance with the matrilineality of their culture—as ancestral mothers who, having now created their clans, could “lie down and rest,” while the many standing, very tall menhirs were their brothers, who surrounded the dolmens and “protected the ancestral mothers.” The stones were thus female and male ancestors, and not just symbolic representations: according to the Khasi way of thinking, their ancestors lived in these stones.[130]

←138 | 139→Following this line of thought, one would have to assume that the people of the epoch of Göbekli Tepe were already aware of their matrilineal genealogy, which included ancestral mothers and their brothers. Even if these people originally lived in an Epipalaeolithic gathering and hunting economy, ongoing construction work brought them together over long periods, resulting in the first formation of matrilineal clans.

This interpretation, namely that in Göbekli Tepe religious practice did not worship masculinity but instead demonstrated reverence for ancestors, is supported by the temple of Nevalı Çori and other locations. This is entirely clear in the case of a smaller statue from the 8th millennium (Adiyaman-Kilisik) which, like the T-pillars, had similar arms and also indications of a face. It is noteworthy that it is holding a small human figure that looks like a child (Fig. 7 b). This is a replica of the T-pillars representing ancestral beings, and seems to be offering or giving the child, exactly in accordance with the Neolithic belief that children come from the female ancestors.[131]

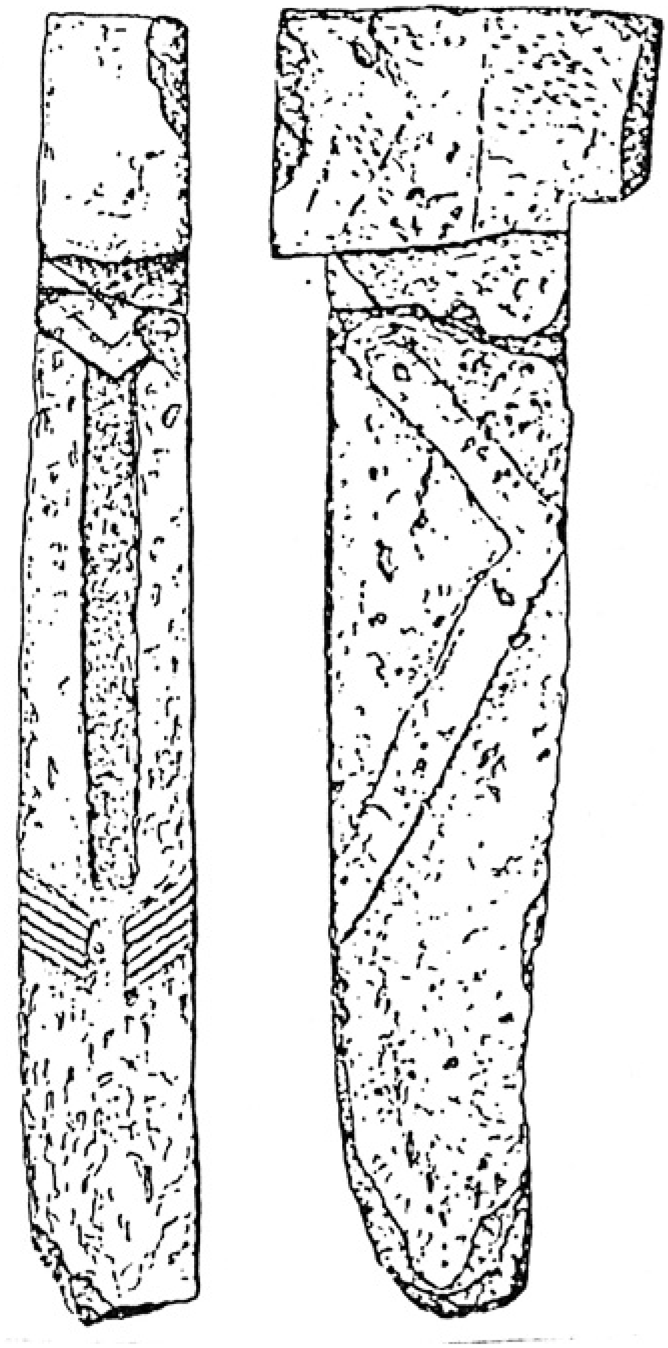


Fig. 7a: T-pillar from the temple of Nevalı Çori, side view and front view (Southeast Turkey)

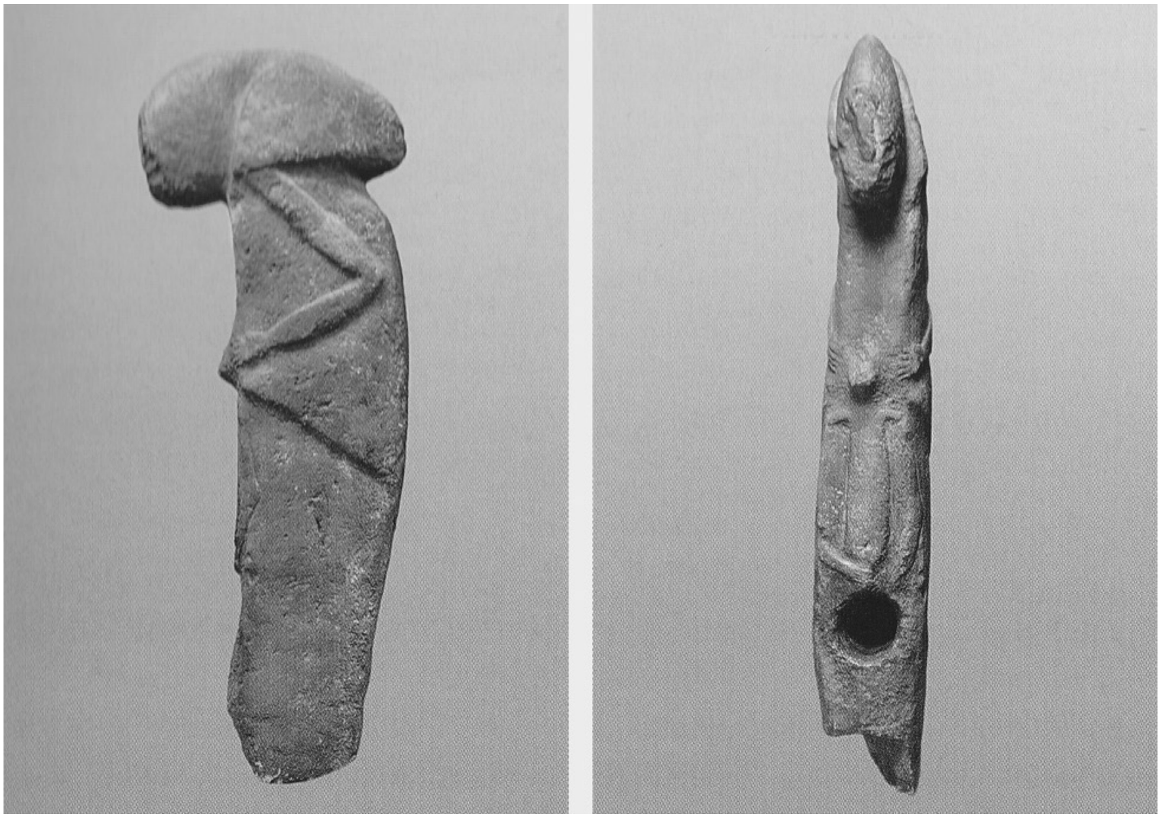


Fig. 7b: Sculpture in human shape of Kilisik, side view and front view (Southeast Turkey)

These considerations make our second question even more relevant; namely, what do the many different animals on Göbekli Tepe's T-pillars signify? Archaeologists have speculated about this, and the most plausible suggestion is that the various animal arrangements are illustrations of myths whose content, as in the Palaeolithic, was expressed through animals.[132] Indeed, myths of this kind are also widespread among indigenous peoples; in this case the animals are a code for their worldview. In Göbekli Tepe, too, the mythic material is rich and diverse; its symbols appear not only on the large T-pillars, but also on small objects, such as stone containers, pendants, and small tablets. These small tablets served exclusively to record content in pictographs resembling hieroglyphic writing. And they were produced thousands of years before “writing” was officially recognized, making it definitively clear that humans have always used writing.[133] Even if this ←139 | 140→writing has not yet been decoded, and the mythic content of the symbols is not known, it is still possible, using comparisons, to infer their meaning.

In terms of worldview, we should note that the animal beings of Göbekli Tepe are by no means only those seen from a hunter’s perspective. True, the depicted mammals include prey such as aurochs, gazelles, wild donkeys and boar, ←140 | 141→but also predators such as foxes and panthers. But the most common are snakes, singly, in groups or even in bundles, along with many other poisonous creatures such as scorpions, spiders, and large millipedes—none of them a prey that would emphasize the male energy of hunters. On the contrary, snakes, because they are poisonous, but also because they can rejuvenate by shedding their skins, were seen in all early cultures as symbols of death and rebirth. Like the poisonous insects, they form part of the symbolism of life and death and were considered magical beings from the Underworld. In contrast to this is the large group of birds, especially cranes, which likewise played an important role in the myths and rituals of many peoples. Due to their size, grace, and enormous flight capacity, they are seen as soul birds, like the ibis and stork, that bring ancestor souls as children from the other world into this one. Birds, then—with the exception of the vulture—are associated with a return to life and are considered magical sky beings.

As for the maleness of the animals and their aggressive demeanor, this is by no means sufficient evidence to support any kind of masculinity cult. Especially not when such an expressly male animal as the bull is depicted without sexual organs and not naturalistically, but—as already in the Palaeolithic—with “turned” horns or even a “turned” head symbolizing the two crescent moons with the rounded full moon in the middle (Fig. 8).[134] This bull has nothing to do with fighting; instead, the ancient religious significance of the moon horns reappears, also fitting into the symbolism of life and death.

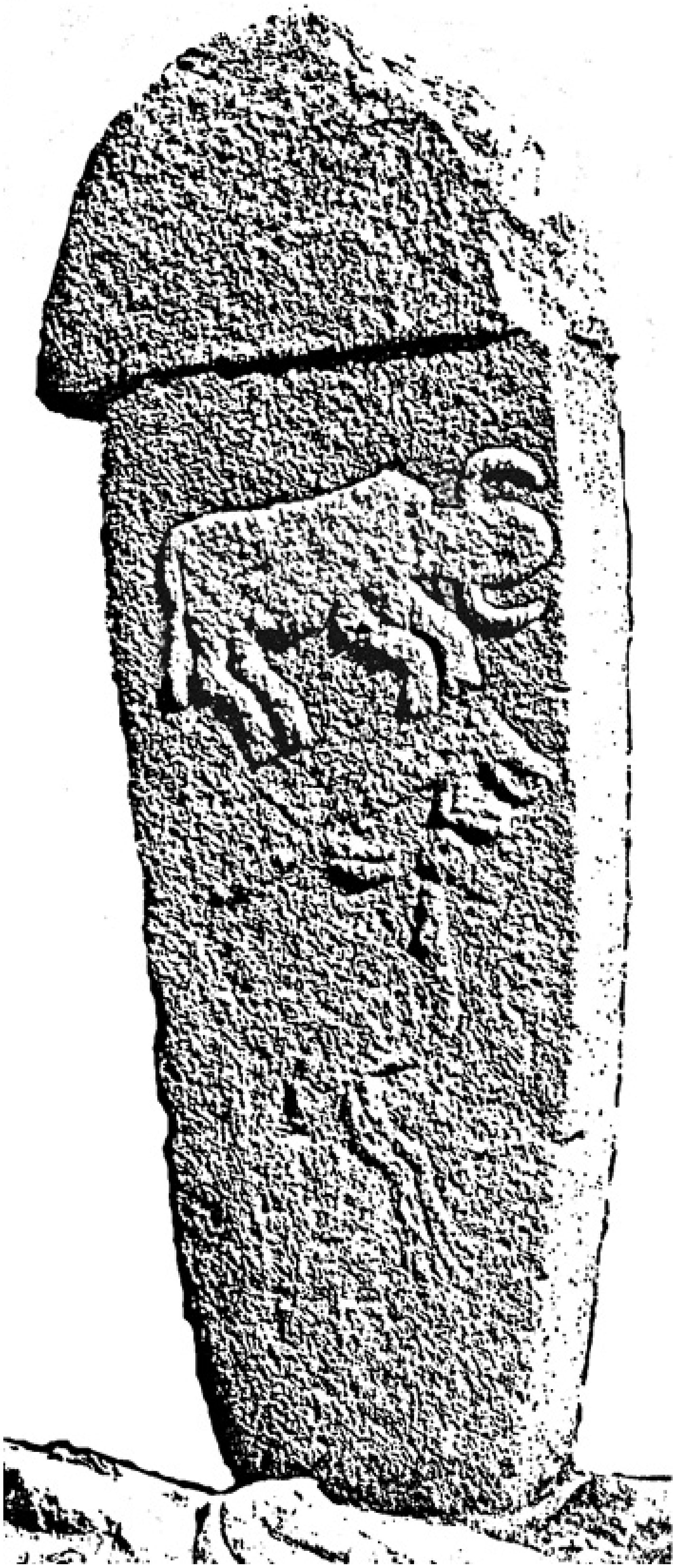


Fig. 8: Relief of a bull with “turned” head, on the eastern central pillar of temple A (Göbekli Tepe) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Other animals such as foxes, panthers, and boars are indeed very male and are shown with teeth and claws. However, they need not be understood as male prototypes, but can be seen as fearsome guardians of the Göbekli Tepe temples. These religious structures were far removed from all settlements and used as holy places for funerary rites and ancestor worship.[135] Such animals played the role of protector, still a classic male role in existing matriarchal societies. In the temple of Nevalı Çori, on the other hand, there were no such beasts, and what’s more, the largest collection of early Neolithic human figurines has been found here. A very plausible archaeological interpretation has been given that the Nevalı Çori settlement was a place for the living—as indicated especially by the female figurines found there—in contrast to the remotely located Göbekli Tepe as a place for the dead and ancestors.[136]

←141 | 142→

An additional meaning of the animals on the pillars of Göbekli Tepe emerges because they can also be regarded as codes for the social order, as indicated by their special arrangement. They appear in combinations of twos and threes, above and beside each other on each of the pillars, such as the combination bull-fox-crane, or fox-boar-crane, or fox-snake, or snake-ram. Similar arrangements of animals, placed vertically one above the other, are found on the wooden “totem poles” of indigenous peoples on the northwest coast of North America. Among indigenous peoples, the myths to which these arrangements refer tell of the beginning and ordering of the human world. For them, “history” is constructed from the stories of the individual clans. The animal combinations of Göbekli Tepe could well mean there were clans with these animal names in this region, and that they were interrelated. Clan names were commonly derived from animals, and still are today among indigenous peoples.[137] Their origin lies in the animal cults of the Palaeolithic, where especially strong, clever, or fast animals were revered in hopes of sharing in their qualities. For indigenous peoples, animals are powerful ←142 | 143→and protective ancestral mothers, so the matrilineal clans took their names.[138] Since these clans did and do not live in isolation, they formed various alliances resulting from their history.

Such clan alliances also probably existed in the region around Göbekli Tepe. They must have been especially strong and long-lasting because they—and not a “male elite”—created the foundation for erecting such gigantic religious edifices over such a long period of time. Possibly there were individual human ancestors who originally formed these alliances for the benefit of all, and these events were immortalized in the animal reliefs on various ancestor pillars in the temples, where the animals symbolize the diverse clans and their names. Such stable clan alliances took the place of settlement structures, which did not exist in the early days of Göbekli Tepe. Megalithic building projects were possible thanks to their cohesion and also their simultaneous specialization.[139] As temples for the dead and the ancestors, the buildings were partially buried in the ground. After some time, the sites were intentionally filled and buried in order to construct new sites on top.[140] In other words, they were never intended to be proud, widely visible monuments of power, but were built into the body of primal Mother Earth, where the female and male ancestors rested until, at the given time, they reemerged and were born again.

The rebirth religion also led to other burial practices that had already been used in the Palaeolithic Era and then carried on into the Neolithic. One in particular was skull burial. During this time skull burials became so common they are now considered a defining characteristic of the West Asian Neolithic. This burial custom was associated with deep religious beliefs, as it was in the Palaeolithic, and it took on highly expressive forms in the Neolithic. The skull, separated from the body, was overlaid with plaster or clay to reproduce the deceased’s facial features, and in some cases ochre coloring was added and mussel shells were inserted to indicate eyes, creating a more lifelike expression. At several sites in the Levant, above all in Jericho and ʿAin Ghazal, but also in North Syria, more than 60 such burials have been found (9th and 8th millennium). In Cayönü in Southeast Anatolia there was even a separate “skull building” holding the skeletons and ← 143 | 144 → skulls of several hundreds of individuals.[141] Such burials were also found in Çatal Höyük and other central Anatolian locations, dating from later epochs (7th and 6th millennium).[142]

Skulls were deposited especially under the floors of houses, in egalitarian distribution by sex. They were found singly or in groups, so-called “skull nests.” There is no indication of violent death, which demonstrates a purely religious practice.[143] One quite touching burial of this kind, found in Çatal Höyük, was the grave of a woman embracing in death one of these plastered and red-painted skulls.[144] There was no differentiation even in terms of age, indicating that not only the honored elders received this kind of burial in the houses.[145] Probably the dead were loved ones whose faces others wished to preserve until the plaster-covered head was interred. This corresponded to the wish that they would have a safe, certain rebirth in accordance with the ancient religion underlying the practice of skull burial. In Çatal Höyük the skulls were always found beneath the sleeping platforms. This allowed the loved ones to speak as ancestral spirits to the living in their dreams, and, if it was the bed of a woman, the souls could enter her womb by the shortest path in order to be reborn. This interpretation is particularly supported by the fact that children were never buried under the man’s bed, but under the woman’s bed. Infants were buried in braided grass baskets near the sacred hearth, which was the woman’s place.[146] The intention was probably to give children who had died young the greatest opportunity to be born again.

Goddesses: Yes or No?

For these reasons it is not surprising that birth, understood as the mystery of rebirth, was unambiguously and repeatedly depicted in the Neolithic, especially as figures in the birthing posture. We have already seen this on the pillar in Nevalı Çori, with two women presenting their vulvas as the “gateway to life.” Likewise, there is a naked female figure on a pillar in Göbekli Tepe, this time complete with head and breasts, one arm raised, and legs spread; she shows her ← 144 | 145 → vulva and opens herself wide for the imminent birth (Fig. 9). This engraving was added after the animal reliefs, since human representation was not part of the repertoire of that earlier period. But there was a good reason for this: when the buildings of Göbekli Tepe were defined as temples for the ancestors, it was left completely open how these would return to life. The later added large female figure in birth position was probably meant to offer them the hope of rebirth. By means of this drawing, the descendants restored the necessary balance between life and death they felt was required.

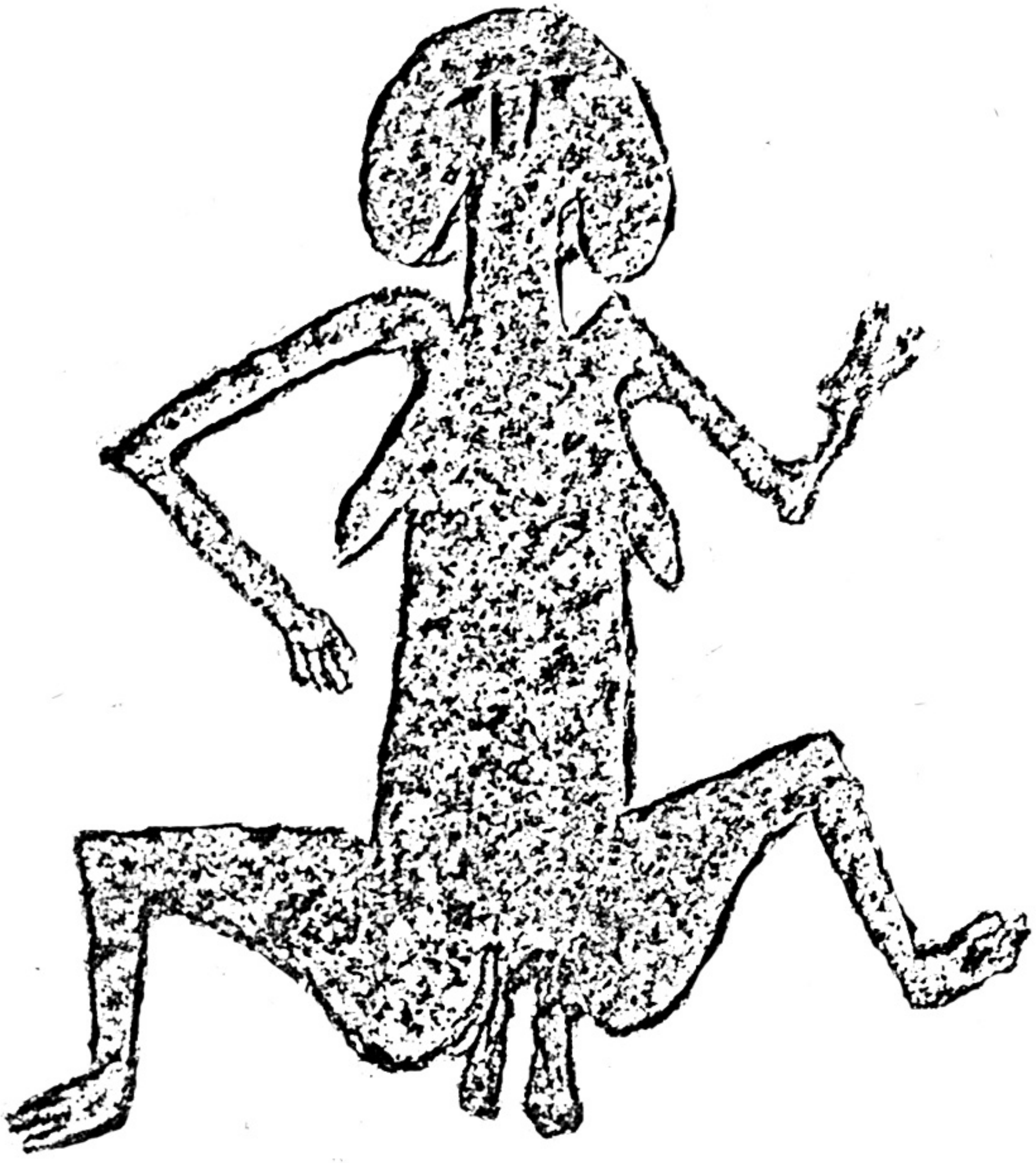


Fig. 9: Engraving of a woman in birthing posture, on a pillar of Göbekli Tepe (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

This becomes very clear in the great wall reliefs and frescos of Çatal Höyük, where we see more-than-human women giving birth with widespread legs and raised arms. According to a very recent archaeological interpretation these represent not goddesses, not even women, but “cowering animals.”[147] This is pure ideology, according to which there can have been no “goddess” in the Neolithic Age.

Let us take a closer look at the religious situation in Çatal Höyük. There were numerous houses, or rooms of worship constructed exactly like the one-room dwellings, and adjoining them. For every group of two to six homes there was one house, or room of worship. These differed in their rich wall paintings, reliefs, ←145 | 146→and other decorations with religious meaning.[148] In recent times they have been demoted to “dwellings,” since ovens and storage areas were also found there. At the same time some people lament that no “public buildings or places of worship” have been found yet in Çatal Höyük.[149]—Here the view is simply wrong, because obviously they are looking for large “special buildings” that could again be attributed to a “male elite.” The presence of ovens and storage areas in these houses is no reason to doubt their religious purpose. Hearths and containers for storage were not profane furnishings in Neolithic thinking, but holy places where sacred meals were consumed and sacrifices made to ancestors.[150] Also, in these special houses there were notably more under-floor burials than in the dwellings.[151] Therefore we should assume that these were communal religious houses, each one for a group of dwellings housing a given clan. Probably each clan had its own house of worship—as was customary, for example, among the matriarchal Hopi, where each clan had its own Kiva.

The symbolic images in these religious houses vary greatly according to the history and characteristics of the different clans, but there are also fundamental similarities. Bulls’ horns and plastered, painted bull skulls (bucrania) are very numerous and appear singly or in series, being used as wall decorations or set into platforms. We have repeatedly emphasized how important these were to humans for millennia. They do not symbolize “male fertility,” but rather the moon phases, and with that the eternal law of “death and renewal.” Only slightly less frequent than the bulls’ horns and bucrania are the large and very large painted wall reliefs of figures with raised arms and legs spread upward, and their importance cannot be overlooked. The first person to excavate them immediately called them “goddesses,” and, due to the standardized birth position, included them in the large group of mother goddesses.[152] Today this view is hotly contested because a small stamp with a bear in the same position was found in the city. The tiny bear is spreading its short arms and lifting its little legs. On the basis of this single small piece, the many large plaster figures are now all supposed to be bears or “cowering animals”[153]—even though they are not cowering and the bear plays no role in the Neolithic iconography of West Asia. Some researchers have gone so far as to claim that this tiny bear is a “masculine” representation—despite the birth position of ←146 | 147→the little figure![154] And now, with astonishing speed, on the basis of this little bear and two male figures (Cafer Höyük and Urfa Stele) along with the individual male animals of Göbekli Tepe, they have concluded that the chief divinity at the time was not female, but male.[155] Such argumentation has nothing to do with scientific inquiry. Rather it is the conscious repression of an unwelcome discovery that, for millennia of human cultural history, the highly revered divine power was female.

Let us look more closely at the evidence for or against the “goddess” in the iconography of Çatal Höyük:

- In one religious room there are two such relief figures in the birthing posture next to each other; one has female breasts (Series C, Fig a). We ask: does a male or female bear look like this? In addition, the raised arms have no similarity to the stubby arms on the bear stamp.
- In another religious room we see a similar relief figure running fast with long flowing hair (Series C, Fig. b). Would a bear or another animal have a hair-do like that?
- Another religious room is furnished with three large bucrania, and, above them, an even larger figure in the birthing posture, giving birth to a ram’s head (Series C, Fig. c) Is a female bear so gigantic in relation to the bulls’ heads? And why should a bear give birth to a ram? That is the big question: why should the bear dominate so many religious rooms when no bear cult is known in West Asia at that time?

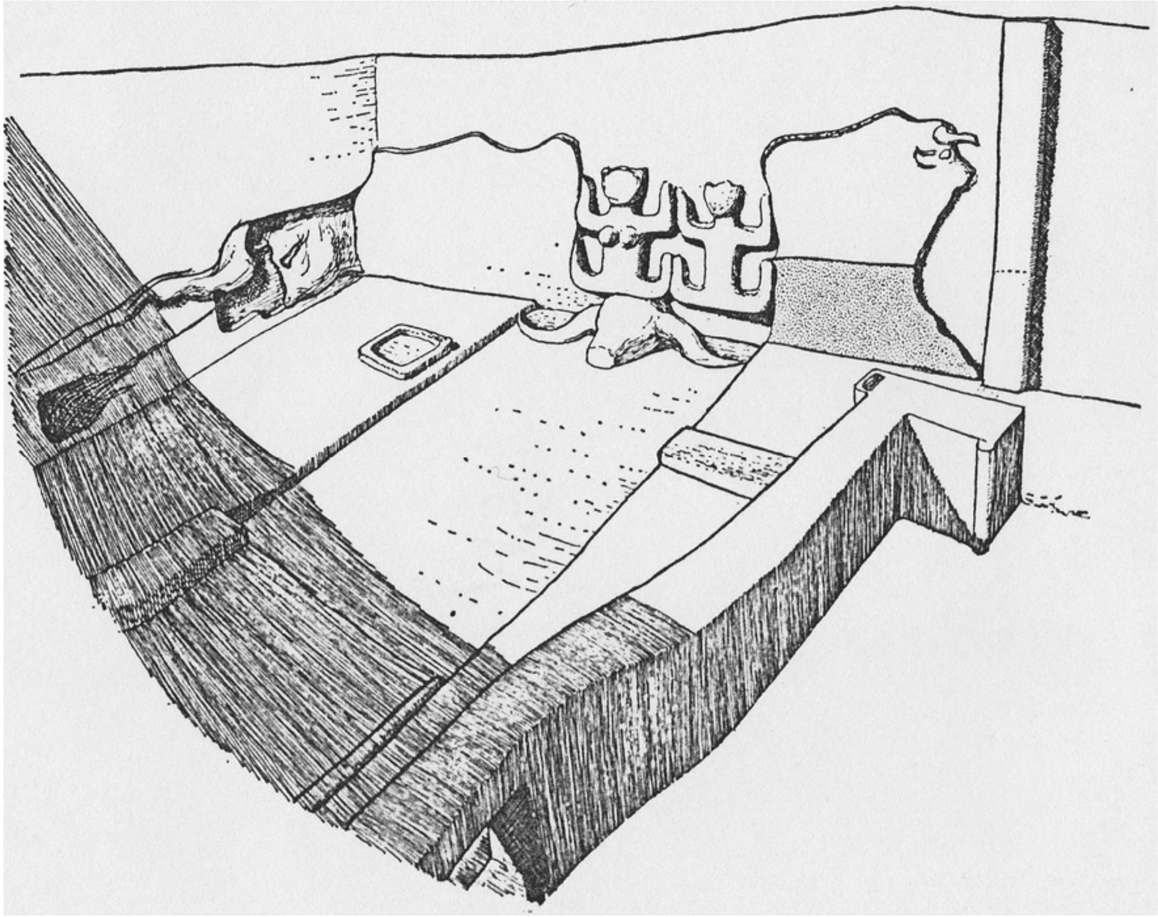


Fig. Series C/a: Two relief figures in birthing posture, one has female breasts; religious room (Çatal Höyük)

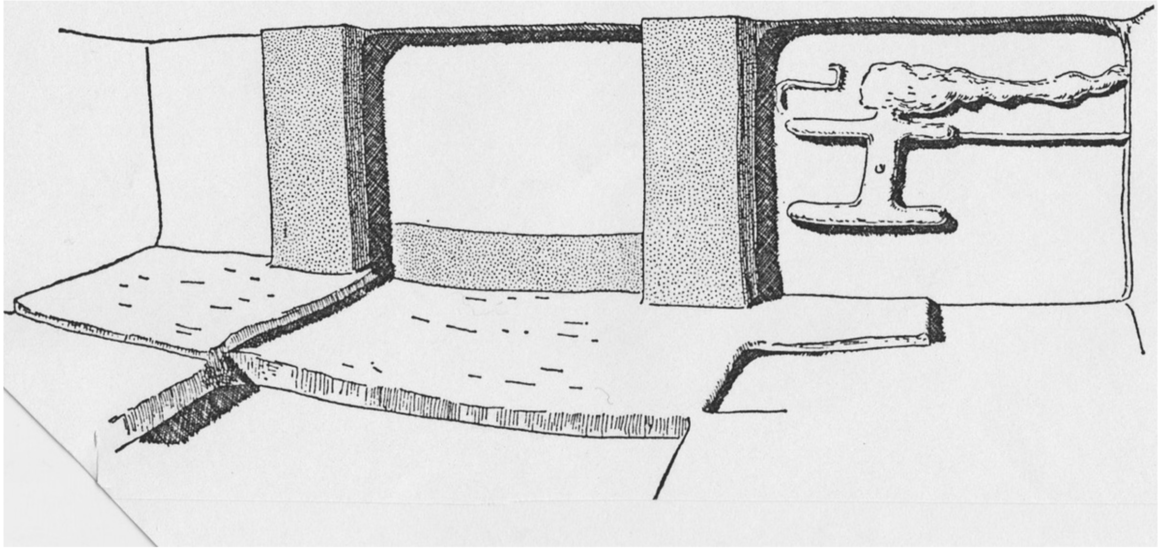


Fig. Series C/b: Relief figure with long flowing hair, religious room (Çatal Höyük)

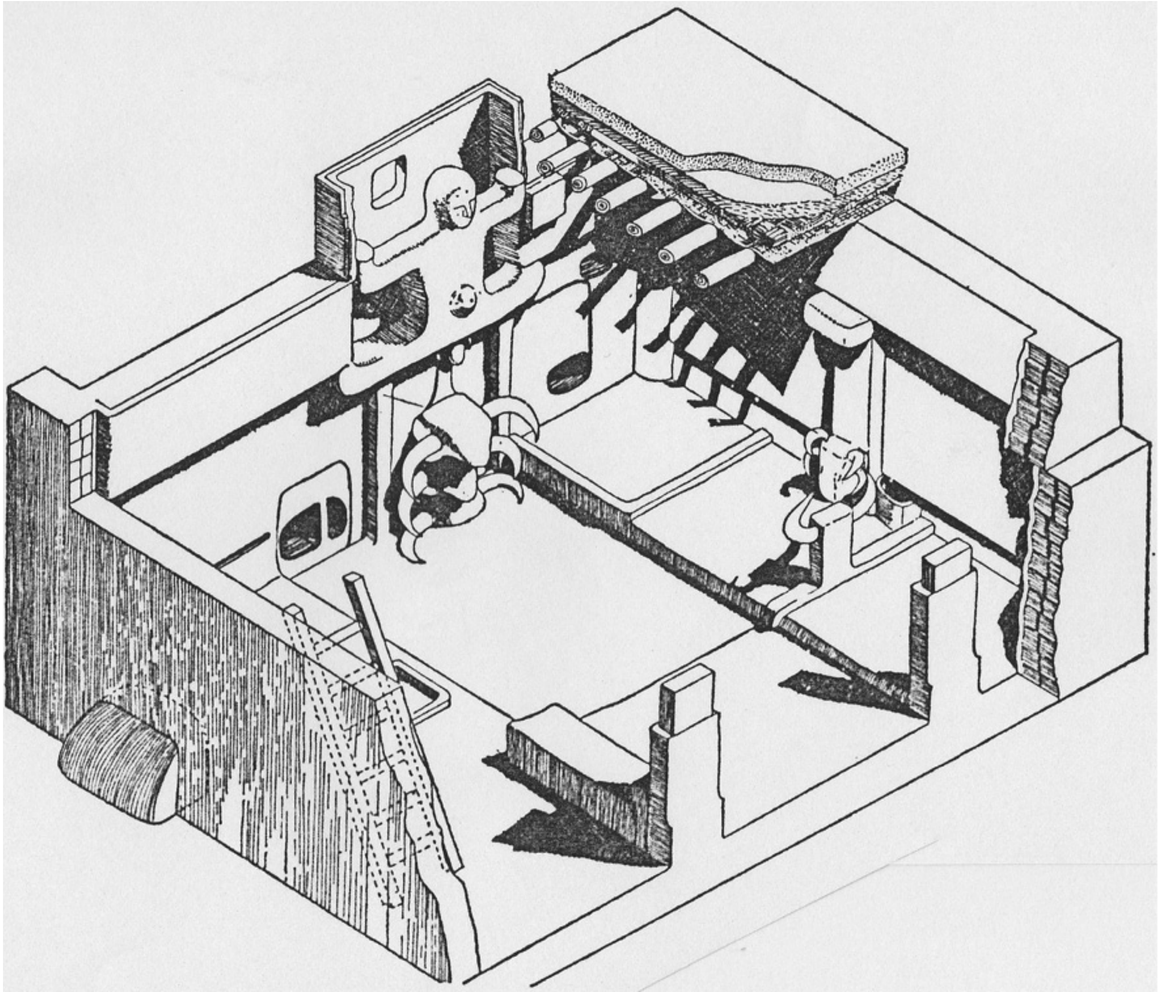


Fig. Series C/c: Large relief figure giving birth to a ram’s head, below at three large bulls’ heads, religious room (Çatal Höyük) (Series C, Fig. a, b, c in: James Mellaart, *Çatal Hüyük*, 115, 140, 152)

These depictions are evidence that, on the contrary, these are human figures. Another female representation of this sort became famous because red circles were painted around her navel, supposedly indicating a pregnancy. And small abstract signs such as angled patterns, crosses, triangles, and circles, are woven together around the entire figure.[156] At first this was thought to be a “delicate garment,” but other relief figures had such patterns beneath their breasts. A new and interesting interpretation suggests that these abstract signs are a “complex ←147 | 148→delineation of genealogies drawn from births and clan alliances.”[157] This corresponds to what we were considering previously regarding Göbekli Tepe. With the reliefs in Çatal Höyük, genealogies and clan alliances clearly emanate from the female figures, further evidence for matrilineality. Women, through births, create ←148 | 149→the matrilineal social order, which means far more than mere “fertility.” This helps us to understand why the birth position is so ubiquitous in these representations. It was extremely important because it not only had the highest religious meaning, but also great social significance.

Due to the schematization of the female relief figures, they do not appear individualized, but prototypical. They can therefore be understood as the ancestral mothers who created the clans, the clan alliances, and thus the social order. These first ancestral mothers gradually were deified, and so the mother goddess evolved as the oldest type of goddess of all. But there was not a single Great Mother Goddess at that time, because each clan had its own deified ancestress. The more-than-human significance of these figures is supported by the fact that bucrania, often several of them were placed beneath the figures, apparently being born (see Series C, Figs. a and c). The iconographic connection between woman and bull/cow is already familiar from the Palaeolithic, because the menstruation cycle connects women with the moon cycle, calendar, and time. In other words, here she gives birth symbolically to important parts of her culture that, along with the moon calendar, were based on the dimension of time.

These representations can, however, be directly understood, in the sense that the rebirth of animals by way of these more-than-human women is also signified; ←149 | 150→they are also the ancestral mothers of animals—one more idea passed on from the Palaeolithic. One fresco clearly indicates this: two parallel figures of this kind are seen, where one gives birth to three bulls’ heads, and the other to four stags’ heads; it is decorated below the figures with panthers and around the edge with climbing and descending plant motifs (Fig. 10). Stags and bulls are precisely the animals hunted and killed by men in the other large wall paintings (Fig. 11 a, b). Whether or not aurochs and stags were actually still being hunted in Çatal Höyük is less important than the symbolism itself for, once again, it represents the general theme of life and death. The age-old idea that men bring death and women give life is repeated here in detail. Given all these characteristics, the reliefs do indeed show goddesses.[158]

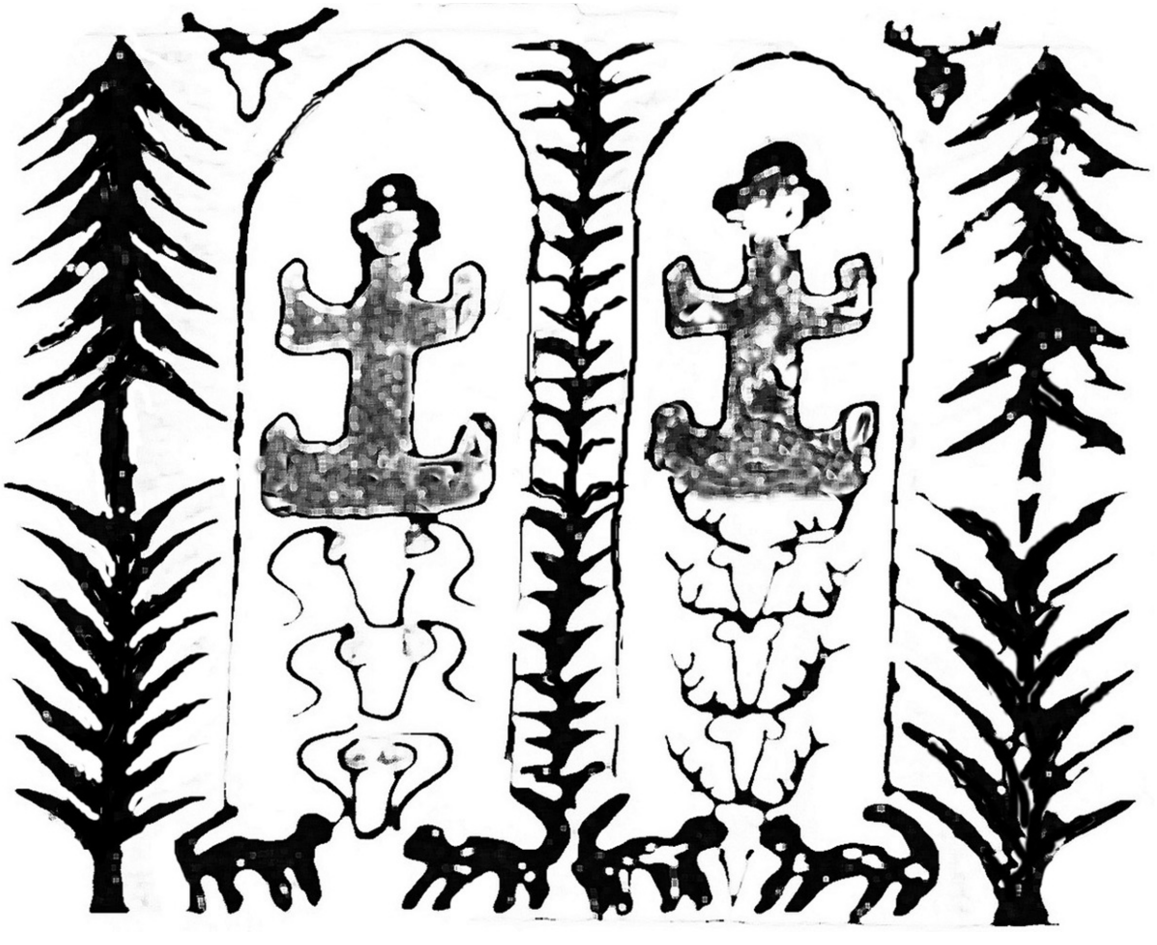


Fig. 10: Painting of two female figures giving birth to bulls and stags (section from the image), religious room, shrine EV 3 (Çatal Höyük) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after James Mellaart)

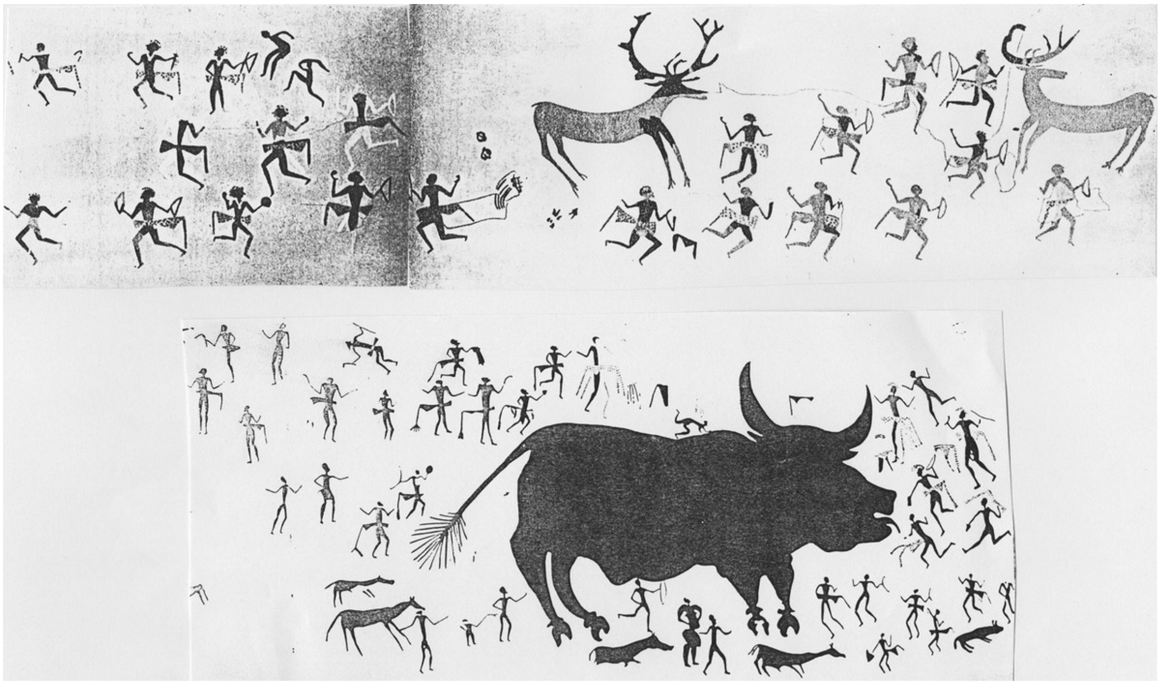


Fig. 11a, b: So-called hunting scenes with stags and a bull, religious rooms (Çatal Höyük)

←150 | 151→The large reliefs were also not the only representations; many additional small female figures express the same ideas. These were often found near the sacred hearth, where women made the figurines and carried out domestic rituals with them.[159] Thus the figurines do not simply depict fat women; instead, with their exaggerated breasts and round bellies, they depict the female-divine power of creation and the nourishment of new life, a power which resided in the real women themselves. Most famous is the birthing goddess on the leopard throne (see Series B, Fig. b), a position that certainly could not be achieved by a human woman. It was found in a grain storehouse, which stands for that part of the new economy developed by women. She was probably viewed as a great mother goddess and as the creator of this new culture.[160]

←151 | 152→Other female figures with predatory cats also point to more-than-human, divine qualities. Over time, these figures transcended the clans and became great goddesses of entire tribes and peoples, even of vast cultural regions in West Asia. In the Bronze Age, we can see the Anatolian goddess Kubaba standing on a lion, as well as her sister goddess Hebatu/Hebat in the rock temple of Yazılıkaya, standing on a feline predator, and being carried by it. Her descendant is the Phrygian Kybele, who sits on a lion-flanked throne or rides in a lion carriage ←152 | 153→(Fig. 12).[161] Inanna, the Great Goddess of Sumer, stands majestically with one foot on a lion (see Fig. 9 of Chapter 6), and the Persian goddess Nurundi sits on a lion throne.[162] From West Asia, this iconography reached South Europe, for in Crete the Great Mother is represented on a mountain and flanked by lions (see Fig. 11 a of Chapter 7), and the goddess Hera of pre-Hellenic Greece is also ←153 | 154→accompanied by a lion or flanked by two. The fame and religion of the Goddess Kybele reached as far as the Roman Empire, where a temple in Rome was dedicated to her.[163] Over millennia, therefore, the energy and power of these animals expresses the creative energy of the divine feminine. Later on, the vulture also took on the form of a goddess and was passed down from the same cultural region: as the goddess of death, Lilith, with vulture wings and claws, crowned with a crown of horns (Fig. 13).

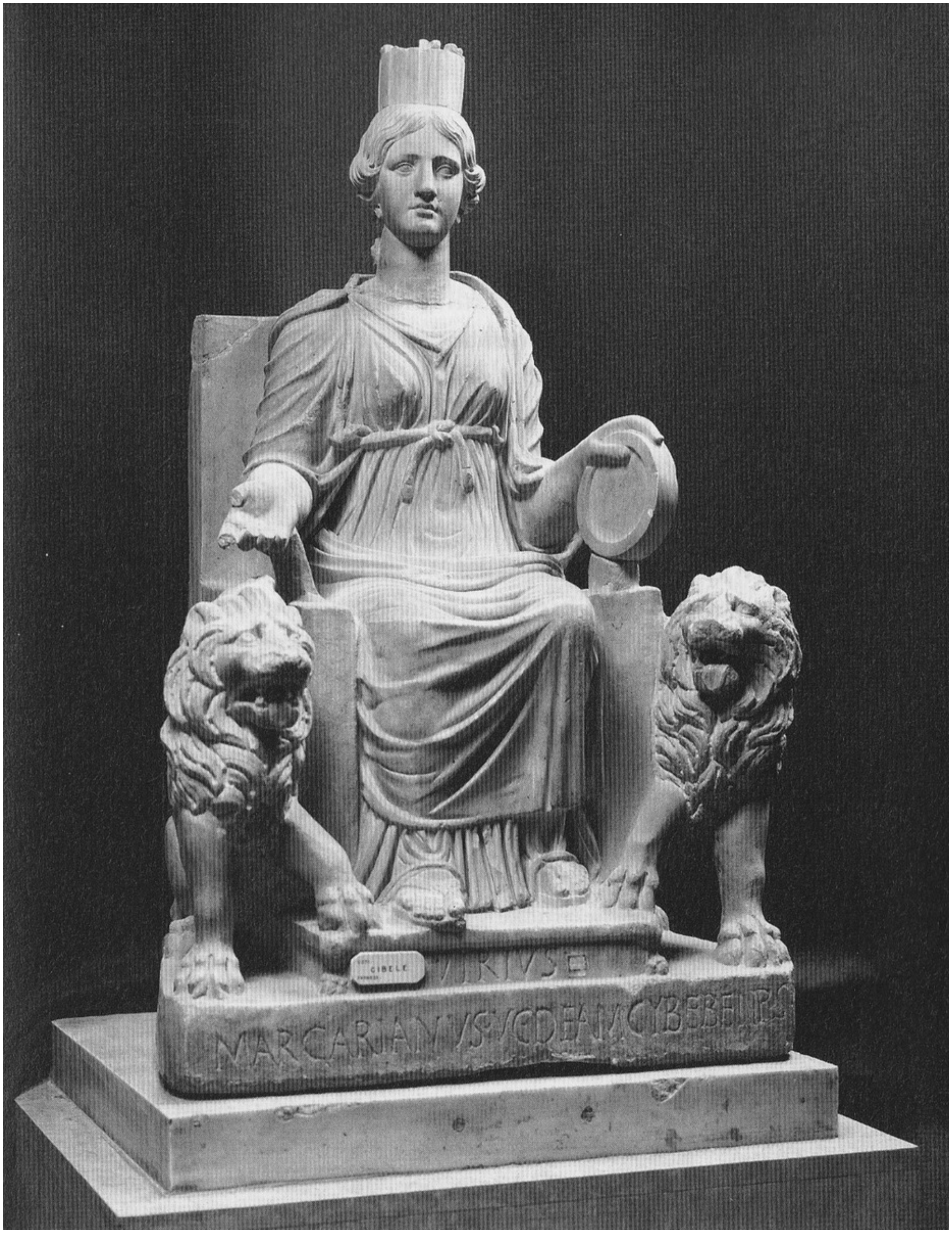

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Fig. 12: The goddess Cybele on a lion throne, Roman sculpture (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples)

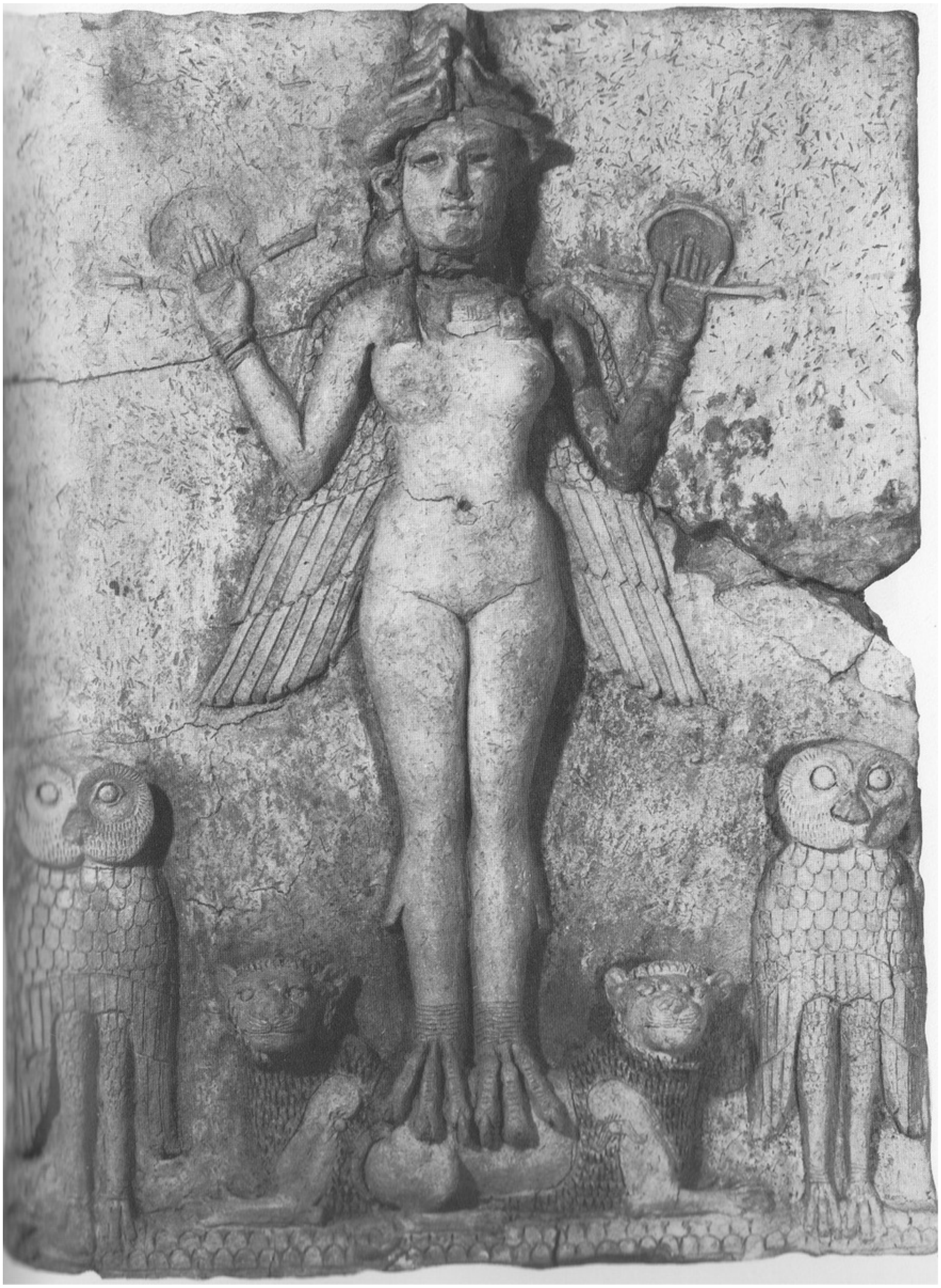

Fig. 13: The goddess Lilith as giver of death, painted plate of baked clay (Sumer, 2nd mill. BCE) (Wikimedia Commons, author:

BabelStone)

These figures were documented in images, writings, and religious practices as *Great Goddesses* with very old roots going back to Neolithic times. Their primeval history in the Palaeolithic epoch was one of the sacred feminine, lasting hundreds of millennia. Thus, just as in the beliefs of the Palaeolithic, woman stood at the center in the Neolithic religion as well, because women were the definitive shapers of this religion.

Finally, we should summarize the conclusions of this chapter.

- The Neolithic society of West Asia was egalitarian throughout the millennia of its creative development, although the men and women’s spheres of action differed. It was a *complementary equality*. Despite the increasing division of labor and social complexity, no hierarchical forms with “elites” and a “Big Man” have been found—to rebut popular ideology. There was no war and there were no military defense installations.
- At the economic level: Neolithic economy was a *producing economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry,* with occasional hunting that gradually diminished in significance. In the late phase *ceramics and copper production* were added. In spite of specialization, the *equal distribution of goods* was practiced, which created an *economy of balance*.
- At the social level: The settlements reveal similar dwellings, and only the *communal buildings* are set apart as places for council meetings and religious gatherings. Some settlements grew to the size and complexity of *cities with the earliest high cultures*. The settlements’ layouts indicate that society was ordered according to *kinship groups, or clans*. The clans arose through the development of *genealogy along the mother’s line (matrilineality)*, which was linked to *matrilocality*. Clan alliances led to the formation of a *kinship society*. Large building projects contributed to *cohesion and religious identity* in the local or regional communities, for example the first megalith structures.

←154 | 155→At the level of culture and religion: The Palaeolithic *rebirth religion*, with women at the center, was developed further. Linked to this was the *veneration of female and male ancestors* along the mother's line, creating an awareness of history. The figures of the first ancestral mothers gradually became *goddesses of the mother goddess type*. Rather than invalidating equality, veneration of the maternal principle strengthened it. Symbolism revolved around *life and death*, and accordingly *rebirth*. The worldview can be classified as *polar cosmology*, founded on the principle of balance; the *female-male polarity* was embedded within this.

Definition

With these characteristics, what we call the *matriarchal form of society* developed for the first time in the West Asian Neolithic. It grew gradually throughout the millennia of this epoch and finally emerged fully formed.

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[1] Compare William Ryan and Walter Pitman: *Noah's Flood*, New York 1998/2000, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 152–161. These authors assume a sudden, catastrophic emergence of the Black Sea, caused by a breakthrough of the Bosporus as a result of an earthquake. Other authors see this process less as a catastrophe; see Liviu Goisan/Florin Filip/Stefan Konstantinescu: "Was the Black Sea catastrophically flooded in the early Holocene?" *Quaternary Science Reviews*, Vol. 28, No. 1–2, 2009, 1–6.

[2] Scientists disagree about the causes. Some believe that a great volcanic eruption (Eifel Volcanic Field) darkened the atmosphere, causing a "volcanic winter." Others see it as the last phase of the Pleistocene (Ice Age).

[3] Schnurbein: *Atlas der Vorgeschichte*, 41–42.

[4] Trevor Watkins: "Der Naturraum in Anatolien. Ein Zusammenspiel von Klima, Umwelt und Ressourcen," in: *Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit*, Karlsruhe 2007, Badisches Landesmuseum, Theiss Verlag. For this and the following see 39–44.

[5] Parzinger: *Die Kinder des Prometheus*, 115.

[6] Watkins, 40. Harald Hauptmann and Mehmet Özdoğan: "Die Neolithische Revolution in Anatolien," in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 28.

[7] See Theya I. Molleson: "Bones of Work at the Origins of Labor," in: *Archaeology and Women: Ancient and Modern Issues*, eds. Sue Hamilton, Ruth Whitehouse, and Katherine I. Wright, Walnut Creek CA, 2007, Left Coast Press. Jane Peterson: "Domesticating Gender: Neolithic Patterns from the Southern Levant," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 29.1, 2010, Elsevier, 252f.

[8] See Peterson’s fine critique of the idea that newly increased indoor activity banned women to the “private realm” and devalued their work, in: Op. Cit., 255. This is absolutely not typical for the Neolithic epochs and is a projection backwards of bourgeois-patriarchal conditions.

[9] Olivier Aurenche: “Das ‘Goldene Dreieck’ und die Anfänge des Neolithikums im Vorderen Orient,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 53. Michael Rosenberg: “Hallan Çemi,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 54.

[10] O. Bar-Yosef: “The Walls of Jericho: An Alternative Interpretation,” *Current Anthropology*, No. 27, 2, 1986, 158.

[11] Hauptmann and Özdoğan, 28. James Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük. A Neolithic Town in Anatolia*, London 1967, Thames and Hudson, Introduction.

[12] Peterson, 251. Parzinger, 114–115.

[13] Rosenberg, 54.

[14] Aslı Özdoğan: “Çayönü,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 58.

[15] Hauptmann and Özdoğan, 27. Aurenche, 52–53. Rosenberg, 54. Mehmet Özdoğan: “Mezraa Teleilat,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 58.

[16] “Pre-Pottery” means here that humans still did not make ceramic vessels; containers such as baskets, pots, and bowls were woven or made of wood or stone. The abbreviation PPN means Pre-Pottery Neolithic.

[17] The translation of “Göbekli Tepe” is “Belly Hill.”

[18] Parzinger, 132.

[19] “Caretakers of the Earth” means that no-one owned the land although they had the right to use it. See Barbara Alice Mann: *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas*, New York 2002, 2004, Peter Lang. Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 14.

[20] Hans J. Nissen: *Geschichte Alt-Vorderasiens*, Munich 2012 (2.), Oldenbourg Verlag, 23; in English: *The early History of the ancient Near East, 9000–2000 B.C.*, Chicago 1988, University of Chicago Press.

[21] See some examples in Svend Hansen: “Kleinkunst und Großplastik. Menschendarstellungen von Vorderasien-Anatolien bis in den Donauraum,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 202–203. There are no male examples of this kind.

[22] A valuation of work activities as “higher” and “lower” first occurs in patriarchy, with its diverse means of worker exploitation. In such societies women’s work–whatever it may be–is always valued less highly and is less well paid.

[23] Parzinger, 138.

[24] The Aswadian sites in the Levant (Plain of Damascus), for example, are outside the distribution area of wild grains, yet remains of grain have been found. These grains arrived by being passed on, and because of their rarity they were planted and even cultivated. Op. cit., 119–120.

[25] Examples of PPN A settlements like this, aside from the ones already mentioned, are Mureybet, Qaramel, Nemrik, Jerf el Ahmar, Tell Abr, Qermez Dere; see Aurenche, 51.

[26] Parzinger, 139.

[27] Nissen, 28.

[28] Aurenche, 53 and 55. Compare the list of PPN B settlements on p. 51.

[29] Op. cit., 55–56.

[30] In addition, the monumental religious building of Nevalı Çori had a terrazzo floor. Terrazzo floors are perfectly joined surfaces made from colored fragments of natural stone. Their production requires advanced techniques that only reappear in the Roman Era, thousands of years later.

31 The tower weighed around 1,000 tons and it stood on a marlstone subsurface, which explains why it often needed repair. See Bar-Yosef: “The Walls of Jericho,” 157.

32 See for example Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 27.

33 Bar-Yosef, 158, 161; Nissen, 27; Aurenche, 63–64.

34 To the north, Jericho’s older circumference wall was badly damaged by flooding from Wadi el-Mafjar, as could still be seen during the excavation; the later wall was thicker here than in other places. See Bar-Yosef, 157, 161.

35 Parzinger, 122–124.

36 Op. cit., 139,140.

37 Mehmet Özdoğan, 153. On environmental destruction through over-hunting and over-grazing also see Braidwood, cited in Seton Lloyd: *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia*, 39, 42.

38 See H. K. Gebel, Z. Kafafi, G. O. Rollefson (eds.): *The Prehistory of Jordan II*, Berlin 1997, Association Ex Oriente, Seminar für Vorderasiatische Altertumskunde, 301–305.

39 Pottery is by no means the most important innovation of that time, but because archaeologists use it to distinguish cultures and epochs, this time is called the “Pottery Neolithic.”

40 Laurens C. Thissen, in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 218–229.

41 Scarre: *Past Worlds. The Times Atlas of Archaeology*, 83.

42 Mihriban Özbaşaran and Marion Cutting: “Das Neolithikum in Zentralanatolien, Entstehung und Entwicklung,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 112–113. Ufuk Esin: “Aşıklı Höyük,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 114. Parzinger, 140.

43 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 30.

44 Esin, 214–217.

45 Özbaşaran and Cutting, 120.

46 Wall paintings found there reproduced a variety of weaving patterns still found today in Turkish kelims. See Mellaart: 30, 116–122. The art of weaving depended on fiber production, which was documented in the Levant; wool production came later (Abu Hureyra). See Peterson, 252.

47 On magic in pottery and weaving see Makilam: *Symbols and Magic in the Arts of Kabyle Women*, New York 2007, Peter Lang. Compare also the Hopi, among whom exclusively women produced pottery; among them were famous artists. See Alfred E. Dittert Jr. and Fred Plog: *Generations in Clay: Pueblo Pottery of the American Southwest*, Flagstaff, AZ 1980, Northland Press.

48 Mueller-Karpe: *Grundzüge früher Menschheitsgeschichte*, 67.

49 Documented by the settlements Bademağacı, Höyücek, Kuruçay, Hacılar and others, which existed from around 7,000 until 6,200; Gülsün Umurtak: “Die jungsteinzeitlichen Siedlungen im südwestanatolischen Seengebiet,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 139–141. Refik Duru: “Die Sieglungshügel von Bademağacı; Hacılar; Höyücek; Kuruçay,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 143, 144, 147, 148.

50 Umurtak, 142–145. Hansen, 202–203 and his catalog, 347–349.

51 Umurtak, 146.

52 Jean Guilaine: “Die Ausbreitung der neolithischen Lebensweise im Mittelmeerraum,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 166–171. James Mellaart: *The Neolithic of the Near East*, New York 1975, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 275.

53 Around the Aegean: Ulucak Höyük and Coşkuntepe; near the Sea of Marmara: Ilıpınar und Menteşe; near the Bosporus: Fikirtepe and Yarımburgas; in Thessaly: Asagi Pinar. See

articles by Mehmet Özdoğan, Altan Çilingiroğlu, Jacob Roodenberg, Songül Alpaslan-Roodenberg, in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 150–160.

54 Mehmet Özdoğan, 156–157.

55 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 278. Mellaart: *The Neolithic of the Near East*.

56 To date, only a fraction of the surface and of the 18 layers of Çatal Höyük's hill settlement have been excavated.

57 It is generally thought that the criterion of writing is a marker of high culture. This factor was also present: see below on the topic of "small tablets with signs."

58 This argumentation already begins with Hallan Çemi, Göbekli Tepe, and Jericho, and continues with every such settlement; see *Die ältesten Monumente*.

59 Özbaşaran and Cutting, 119. Also Ian Hodder: "Çatal Höyük," in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 125.

60 Stella Souvatzi: "Social Complexity is Not the Same as Hierarchy," in: *Socialising Complexity: Structure, Interaction, and Power in Archaeological Discourse*, ed. Stephanie Kohring and Sheila Wynne-Jones, Oxford 2007, Oxbow Books, 37–59.

61 Parzinger, 148.

62 See the critique in Stella Souvatzi: "Land Tenure, Social Relations and Social Landscapes," in: *An Archaeology of Land Ownership*, ed. Maria Relaki and Despina Catapoti, New York-London 2013, Routledge, 21–23. In the Marxist context, the source of this prejudice was Friedrich Engels, who explained the origin of hierarchy and patriarchy by "differentiation of labor," an idea that was stereotypically repeated; see the critique in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 1.

63 See the critique of this reductive economics-based thinking on the basis of a one-dimensional social evolutionism in Souvatzi: "Social Complexity," 37–38.

64 See the critique in Ian Kuijt and Nigel Goring-Morris: "Foraging, Farming, and Social Complexity in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Southern Levant: A Review and Synthesis," *Journal of World Prehistory* 16, No. 4, 2002, 418–431.

65 Kuijt and Goring-Morris, 421. Peterson, 254. Clemens Lichter: "Geschnitten oder am Stück? Totenritual und Leichenbehandlung im jungsteinzeitlichen Anatolien," in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 253.

66 See the data in Peterson, 252, 260. Also Başak Boz: "Aus dem Leben im Neolithikum. Einblicke in die damalige Lebensweise nach Befunden von Skelettüberresten," in: *Die ältesten Monumente,* 241.

67 Kuijt and Goring-Morris: "Foraging, Farming, and Social Complexity."

68 Existing structures of domination are recognized through an "enforcement staff" such as warriors, armed forces, police, bureaucracy, judiciary, prisons, etc. This is a concept of Christian Sigrist: *Regulierte Anarchie. Untersuchungen zum Fehlen und zur Entstehung politischer Herrschaft in segmentären Gesellschaften Afrikas,* Frankfurt/Main 1979, Syndikat Verlag.

69 Ian Hodder: "Women and Men at Çatal Höyük," *Scientific American* 290, January 2004, 79–82. See also Diane Bolger: "The Dynamics of Gender in Early Agricultural Societies of the Near East," *Signs* 32, No. 2, Winter 2010. Bolger also gives an example indicating the existence of social equality in funerary customs into the late Neolithic/Copper Age: Domuztepe in southeastern Anatolia (6,500-5,500), 515.

70 This was determined also for Çayönü and Aşıklı Höyük through skeletal analysis. See Başak Boz, 240.

71 The bones had deposits of soot from hearth fires, and testing showed that these deposits were the same for both genders. See Başak Boz, 245.

72 Hodder: “Women and Men at Çatal Höyük,” 79–82; Peterson, 255.
73 Hodder: Op. cit., 80.
74 Souvatzi: “Social Complexity.”
75 Op. cit., 38, 40–43.
76 Case study of Dimini in Op. cit., 40 f.
77 Op. cit., 43–44.
78 Op. cit., 49.
79 Ibid. Also Souvatzi: “Land Tenure,” 29–30.
80 Souvatzi: “Social Complexity,” 45, 46.
81 For this see the complex horizontal organization of matriarchal indigenous societies, and even of five indigenous societies among each other (Iroquois League); likewise with the matriarchal Minangkabau (Sumatra), who live both in the country and in the cities. For these and further examples, see Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 8 and 14.
82 Souvatzi: “Social Complexity,” 50, 51.
83 See for examples Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.
84 This was discovered by a research group from the University of Freiburg (Germany) and from the Danube Private University Krems (Austria), Project SIGN: Kurt W. Alt et al.: “Insights into the Social Structure of the PPNB Site of Kfar HaHoresh, Israel, based on Dental Remains,” *PLOS One* 10 (9), No. e0134528, 2015.
85 Not only these individuals were buried in the house, but often several people.
86 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 73–75. Mellaart was the first excavator (1967), he found the skeletons still “in situ.”
87 See this pattern of “avunculate” in existing matriarchal societies in: Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.
88 For the great significance of the sister-brother pair in matriarchal societies see Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese: “Restoring Liberative Elements of Our Cultural Gender Arrangements” in: Goettner-Abendroth (ed.): *Societies of Peace*.
89 For these patterns of visiting marriage, see the Mosuo and other peoples in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*. –In Çatal Höyük there were also in-house burials of unrelated persons, meaning they came from outside the mother clan. This could indicate adoption into the clan, a common custom in matriarchal societies.
90 Ibid.
91 Hodder: “Women and Men at Çatal Höyük,” 81. He refers to the custom of skull burials in Çatal Höyük, see below.
92 See the criticism of Hodder (“Women and Men at Çatal Höyük”) in: Heide Goettner-Abendroth: “Did Matriarchal Forms of Social Organization Exist at Çatal Hüyük?” *The Journal of Archaeomythology*, 2, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2006.
93 Marija Gimbutas: *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*, San Francisco 1991, HarperSanFrancisco, 9.
94 See the compilation of various aspects of such female double figurines in: Vicki Noble: *The Double Goddess*, Rochester, VT 2003, Bear & Company.
95 On their worldwide spread, Ibid
96 See the Trobriand Islanders, in: Malinowski: *The Sexual Life*. See also the traditional beliefs of Berber women, in: Makilam: *Symbols and Magic*.
97 Souvatzi: “Social Complexity,” 147. Hodder, in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 124.
98 Özbaşaran and Cutting, 118–121. Also Hodder: Op. Cit., 124–125.
99 Souvatzi: “Land Tenure,” 31–33.

100 Patterned clay stamp seals found in the houses were interpreted as “markers for private possessions” (Nissen, 32. And *Die ältesten Monumente*, Catalog 370–371). That is highly doubtful, since these stamps could also have been used to print fabrics, leather, and other materials. If they were really seals, then they were more than likely used to mark clan property, since there was no private property. Clan property was not “private,” as shown by the fact that material goods were always shared to achieve a balance. Adherence was not to property, but to a tradition calling for the equal distribution of goods to all members of the community. See Souvatzi: “Social Complexity,” 40 f.

101 Bar-Yosef, 159–160.

102 Indigenous societies are known to use public celebrations to ensure equal distribution, for example, in the Mexican city Juchitán, studied in Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen; “Gegenseitigkeit statt sozialer Gerechtigkeit. Zur Kritik der kulturellen Ahnungslosigkeit im modernen Patriarchat,” in: *Ethnologische Frauenforschung*, ed. Brigitta Hauser-Schaeublin, Berlin 1991, Dietrich Reimer Verlag; Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen (ed.): *Juchitán, Stadt der Frauen. Vom Leben im Matriarchat*, Reinbek 1994, Rowohlt.

103 Rosenberg, 54–55.

104 Aurenche, 63.

105 Rosenberg, 54.

106 Aurenche, 56.

107 Op. cit., 61, 63.

108 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 53.

109 Fig. in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 93.

110 Fig. in: Op. cit., 84.

111 Fig. in: Op. cit., 288.

112 Harald Hauptmann and Klaus Schmidt: “Anatolien vor 12 000 Jahren. Die Skulpturen des Frühneolithikums,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 70–72.

113 Nicholas J. Conard and Petra Kieselbach in: *Eiszeit*, 282–286. –For most of the objects of this kind, scars and scratches prove that they had no autonomous meaning, but served as tools, as pounding stones, retouching tools, and whetstones. Thus it is more likely that individual men gave a phallic shape to their tools because it corresponded to their sense of manhood and the general symbolic thinking, without reflecting any further meaning.

114 Ibid.

115 See, for examples on this topic, Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*.

116 See, for examples on this topic, Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie*. Also Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen. Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie in vier Alpenländern*, Bozen 2016, Raetia Verlag.

117 Malinowski: *Sexual Life of Savages*; Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Frau Holle. Das Feenvolk der Dolomiten*, Königstein 2005, Ulrike Helmer Verlag.

118 Malinowski: Ibid.

119 For the traditional culture of the Iroquois, see Barbara A. Mann: *Spirits of Blood, Spirits of Breath. The Twinned Cosmos of Indigenous America*, New York 2016, Oxford University Press. For the traditional culture of the Tuareg, see Hélène Claudot-Hawad: “‘We are the Shelter and the Protection’. The Representation of Gender among the Tuareg,” in: Goettner-Abendroth: *Societies of Peace*.

120 Barbara A. Mann: Ibid.

121 For more on sacred marriage in mythology, see Robert Graves: *The Greek Myths*. E. O. James: *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, London 1959, Thames and Hudson. Heide

Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros*, Stow MA, 1995, Anthony Publishing. Reprint in e-version on: www.goettner-abendroth.de/EN

122 For example, in the traditional indigenous culture of the Berbers, see Jean Servier: *Tradition et Civilisation Bèrbères. Les Portes de l'Année*, Monaco 1985, Éditions du Rocher.

123 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 343.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 Klaus Schmidt: "Die Steinkreise und die Reliefs des Göbekli Tepe," in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 96.

127 Op. cit., Catalog 268.

128 Hauptmann and Schmidt: Op. cit., 81.

129 For example, menhirs with sexual characteristics have been found in Sardinia, and stone steles with faces and attributes have been found in Sitten/Sion in Valais (Switzerland).

130 H. H. Godwin-Austen: "On the Stone Monuments of the Khasi Hill Tribes, and on Some of the Peculiar Rites and Customs of the People," in: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1, 1872.

131 Hauptmann and Schmidt, 80–81, and Catalog 276. –This figure also reveals no sex, since the hole beneath the child can hardly be seen as a vulva, nor did it serve for placing a phallus, as some claim. The latter makes no sense in connection with the child, since children do not emerge from a phallus. Possibly the hole served a practical purpose for support.

132 Schmidt, 85, 88.

133 Çiğdem Köksal-Schmidt and Klaus Schmidt: "Perlen, Steingefäße, Zeichentäfelchen. Handwerkliche Spezialisierung und steinzeitliches Symbolsystem," Op. cit., 97–99, 101–104, 106–109. –In 1978, a Berlin Congress ("25. internationales Treffen vorderasiatischer Altertumswissenschaftler") cast some light on this matter, since these archaeologists assume that the sign systems mentioned here (from 9th to 4th millennium) were early precursors of cuneiform inscription (from the 4th millennium). But it is more likely that they were a unique writing system than a "precursor." –See also Harald Haarmann: *Writing as technology;* German edition: *Geschichte der Schrift*, 17. Haarmann points out early societies that used writing but did not yet form hierarchical states.

134 Köksal-Schmidt and Schmidt, 83.

135 Op. cit.; Hauptmann and Schmidt, 76–77; Schmidt, 88–92.

136 Hauptmann and Schmidt, 77, 79.

137 For example, the Wolf Clan, Bear Clan, Heron Clan, Beaver Clan, Turtle Clan, etc. among the Iroquois peoples. See Mann: *Spirits of Blood, Spirits of Breath*, 95.

138 This is still clear among the matriarchal Mosuo, whose animal clan names end in "mu," meaning "mother," for example "La-mu" meaning "Tiger Mother." See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchat in Südchina*.

139 It is also known, concerning indigenous peoples, that certain clans practice certain crafts that are passed on within the clan. This was not associated with a monopoly since each clan had its own craft that complemented the skills of the other clans.

140 Schmidt, 75.

141 Op. cit., 59–60. Parzinger, 126.

142 Aslı Özdoğan, 59, Aurenche, 60, Lichter, 250–252.

143 Lichter, 248.

144 Op. cit., 251–252.

145 Op. cit., 253–254.

146 Op. cit., 255. Marion Cutting: “Wandmalereien und -reliefs im anatolischen Neolithikum. Die Bilder von Çatal Höyük,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 128. Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 74–75; Hodder: “Women and Men,” 81.

147 Hansen, 200.

148 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 87, 95f.

149 Hodder, in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 125.

150 Hansen, 202.

151 Lichter, 254.

152 Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 95f. The table documenting the frequency of these figures, 106–107.

153 Cutting, 128, and Hansen, 200.

154 Catalog *From Earth to Eternity: Çatal Höyük*, Exposition in Istanbul 2006, Yapi Kredi, 48. –In this catalog there is not a single image of the great reliefs (“Goddesses”), but twice, just the tiny bear. This is how the audience is manipulated and the public misled.

155 Nezih Başgelen and Mehmet Özdoğan: *Neolithic in Turkey, the Cradle of Civilization: New Discoveries*, Galatasaray, Istanbul 1999, Arkeoloij ve Sanat Yayınları, 234.

156 Depicted in Hansen, 200.

157 J. D. Forest: “Çatal Höyük et son décor: Pour le déchiffrement d’un code symbolique,” *Anatolia Antiqua II*, 1993, Institut français d’études anatoliennes, 43–69.

158 This interpretation is further supported by handprints of women, men, and children in red pigment on the large reliefs of women, and also on the animal heads, that were left behind during prayers; see Mellaart: *Çatal Hüyük*, 101, 102, image 124. This Palaeolithic custom also continued in the Neolithic.

159 Hansen, 200.

160 Op. cit., 199.–In this context, Ian Hodder’s argumentation seems strange when he claims that there were more depictions of men than women in Çatal Höyük, in his attempt to play down the significance of women and find evidence for male dominance (see Hodder: “Women and Men at Çatal Höyük,” 82.) He refers to the wall paintings of bull and stag hunting with many small men and likewise male animals (see Fig. 11 a, b of the book in hand). Counting the animals makes no sense because they are not men. Clearly, the men are humans, but they appear while hunting in groups and are very small, almost like stick figures. In contrast to these are the large female reliefs in the religious rooms and the very expressive female figurines that show more-than-human characteristics because they are goddesses. Goddesses are, of course, less numerous than humans. It remains a riddle how this could be “male dominance,” especially in a society Hodder himself had previously called “egalitarian.” See Goettner-Abendroth: “Did Matriarchal Forms exist in Chatal Hüyük?”

161 Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros*, Chapter 5. Reprint on: www.goettner-abendroth.de/EN

162 Miriam Robbins Dexter: “Ancient Felines and the Great Goddess in Anatolia: Kubaba and Cybele,” in: *Proceedings of the 20th Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, Los Angeles 2008, published Bremen 2009, Hempen Verlag, 53–67. Miriam Robbins Dexter: *Whence the Goddess. A Source Book*, New York-London 1990, Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

163 Dexter: “Ancient Felines.” Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros.*

4

Neolithic in the Mediterranean and Europe: The Development of Matriarchal Societies

Chronology of the Neolithic Era for Europe

10,000 – 6,000/4,000 BCE:	Mesolithic in Central and Northern Europe
6,800/6,600 – 3,500 BCE:	Neolithic in the Aegean Region
6,600 – 3,500 BCE:	Neolithic in Southeast Europe and South Europe (Adriatic Region)
5,500 – 2,800/2,200 BCE:	Neolithic in Central Europe
5,900 – 2,600/2,200 BCE:	Neolithic in the Western Mediterranean (independent development from 8th century; influences from the Adriatic region only as from the 6th century)
5,400/5,000 – 2,600/2,200 BCE:	Neolithic in the Atlantic West Europe
4,500/3,900 – 2,500/2,100 BCE:	Neolithic in the British Isles and in North Europe

The Copper Stone Age (Chalcolithic) is included in these dates as a Neolithic phase.

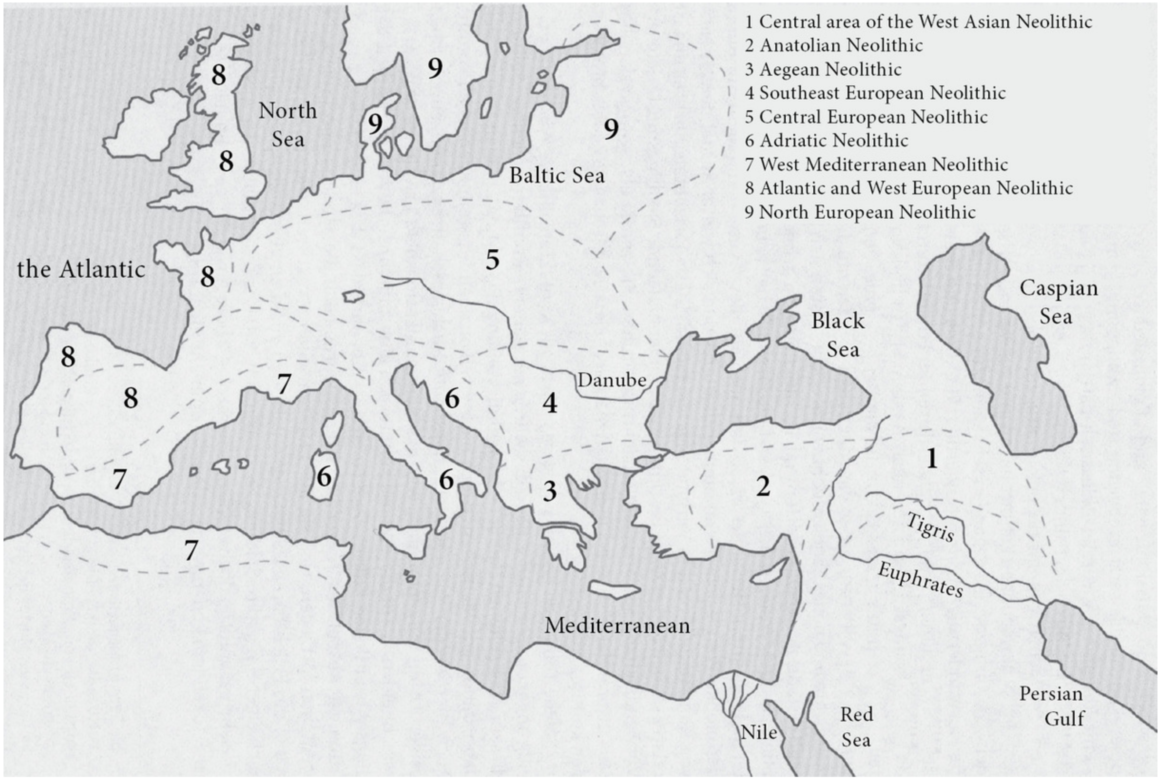
←157 | 158→

Encounters between Mesolithic and Neolithic Peoples

The great thaw after the Ice Age also transformed Europe. Two forces were now everywhere: water and forests. Due to the shift in climate zones, Europe became part of the temperate zone and has remained so to this day. Humans had to change with this climatic upheaval, evolving from steppe hunters to forest hunters, shooting the animals that lived in the woods with bows and arrows.[1] The animals of the cold steppe moved ever further north and some groups of humans followed them. The plants gathered by humans became more abundant and varied than ever as the post-glacial winters were mild. Given the masses of water existing at that time, namely great rivers and lakes rich in fish, fishing became the third stable food source for humans, and they could travel everywhere by water, making them considerably more mobile than walking on dry land.[2] This development continued for a long time in Central and North Europe (10,000 – 6,000/4,000). Thanks to this abundance, humans faced few challenges that might have forced them to invent new economic and cultural techniques, as had been the case during the ice ages in Europe.

While these areas remained in the Mesolithic Age, in West Asia the Neolithic Age had long since fully developed with groundbreaking innovations. However, humans did not stay in their villages and towns to carry out the newly invented activity of growing crops but were very mobile and traveled by boat on the rivers and sea. This helped the Neolithic way of life to spread very quickly. Consequently, southern Europe came under the influence of the West Asian Neolithic Age in the 7th millennium and took a different course from central and northern Europe. The complete “Neolithic package” of house building and settled life, agriculture using the hoe, animal husbandry, weaving and pottery, Neolithic art and religion appeared here abruptly and unprecedentedly, without the thousands of years of development to reach such achievements that could be seen in Europe.[3] Instead, the West Asian Neolithic culture was brought by land over the then non-existent Bosporus to South Europe and, over this land bridge, ←158 | 159→reached eastern Greece from 6,600 (Map 3).[4] It also reached South Europe by water along the rivers of West Turkey and the coast, sometimes even across the open sea as documented earlier in Cyprus, from 8,300, and from 6,800 in Crete. From 6,200, the Neolithic way of life began in western Greece and Italy around the Adriatic, and from the Black Sea it followed the Danube up to southeastern Europe, where the Danubian cultures began to flourish. From 5,900 onwards, this new way of life spread along the coasts in the western

Mediterranean, although it had already begun as an independent development in the 8th millennium in Spain and South France with impulses from North Africa. From 5,400 to 5,000, the Neolithic culture spread from there along the Atlantic coasts of West Europe in a northerly direction, and from 4,500, it moved further north to the British Isles, northern Europe and South Scandinavia. From Southeast Europe it came along the Danube, the most important waterway, even earlier to Central Europe, namely from 5,500, where it coexisted a long time with the Mesolithic way of life (see Map 1 in Chapter 4).


1 Central area of the West Asian Neolithic
2 Anatolian Neolithic
3 Aegean Neolithic
4 Southeast European Neolithic
5 Central European Neolithic
6 Adriatic Neolithic
7 West Mediterranean Neolithic
8 Atlantic and West European Neolithic
9 North European Neolithic
North Sea
Baltic Sea
the Atlantic
Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Danube
Tigris
Euphrates
Mediterranean
Persian Gulf
Red Sea
Nile
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Map 3: The spreading of the Neolithic way of life in West Asia and Europe

There has been much speculation as to why the Neolithic way of life spread relatively rapidly in Europe. One proposal is that there was mass immigration by large groups of people searching for new land, spreading even more extensively due to development in river and coastal navigation (theory of migration). Another suggestion is that communication and exchange networks spread without significant immigration, that is, knowledge and technology were passed on and adopted by neighboring peoples (theory of acculturation). The reality was most certainly a combination of both processes although, according to the latest findings, migration was the predominant process. In no case, however, was there any “colonization” or “missionization” by Neolithic “pioneers” since this presupposes conquest and the forced conversion of an older, native population. These are classically patriarchal phenomena for which no evidence has been found in the Neolithic Age.[5]

←159 | 160→The two questions that concern us here are the factors which led to the different migratory movements and how acculturation might have taken place, if it occurred. To the first question: One ecological factor behind migration is the ←160 | 161→change in climate and environment, a factor already seen in the decline of the ancient Neolithic cultures in the Fertile Crescent, which triggered population movements to the West, South and North. Another, rather more continuous factor is demography, since a more sedentary way of life led to population growth and the cultivated land around settlements was no longer sufficient, resulting in a search for new land. Clans detached themselves from the mother settlement to set up daughter villages and towns. After these had been established, the people from daughter settlements would cultivate friendly relations with their mother town as their place of origin, thus developing an increasingly dense and expanding network of connections and communication, a development that did not require a nomadic way of life. Such horizontal expansion takes place relatively quickly and produces contiguous settlement patterns based on kinship and social memory. This has been observed as a traditional practice in indigenous matriarchal societies.[6]

It is often assumed, rather rashly, that these separations were accompanied by conflict. However, this was not necessarily the case since such conflicts would have been permanent. Even in those rare cases when conflict occurred, dividing up a settlement would have provided a solution, with people leaving so that each group could live as they wished.

Here, too, good neighborly relations were established between the two settlements after the split, extending the communication network instead of breaking it up.[7] This helped to increase the diversity of Neolithic cultural regions without resulting in “breakaway secession.” Another hypothesis is that people moved away because they did not agree with the hierarchical structures, such as those arising in the heart of the Fertile Crescent, subsequently establishing their own egalitarian settlements.[8] This would have been very wise on the part of those moving away but, as we have seen, the basis of the hierarchy theory is rather shaky and the argument does not hold water.

There has been speculation as to why Neolithic culture spread so rapidly just in southeastern, southern and central Europe. However, this overlooks the fact that Europe is a highly favorable continent in ecological terms, with abundant rainfall and no drought. It also has an extensive system of rivers that do not dry out, providing ideal waterways. This extremely well-divided and proportioned ←161 | 162→continent is neither too cold nor too hot, and a rich variety of plants and animals grows and lives here, offering Neolithic immigrants the best conditions, the like of which did not exist at all in West Asia.

The Neolithic culture’s speed of expansion refutes the second idea, namely the theory of acculturation, as acculturation would take much longer. However, wherever they went, the newcomers with their Neolithic culture found people with a Mesolithic gathering and hunting economy and came into contact with them. This was not violent either, for different regions were inhabited by both cultures. The Neolithic people settled mainly on hills and shores of rivers and lakes, whose alluvial soils were favorable for crop cultivation, while the Mesolithic people preferred the forests of hilly country where they found what they gathered and hunted. They did not meet very often; both populations kept themselves separate. The current state of genetic testing indicates it was predominantly a form of immigration and the mixing of different populations played only a minor role.[9]

To some extent, however, there was a passing on of goods and knowledge. But the Mesolithic people were not violently “overrun” by Neolithic “missionaries” and “development workers” who wanted to “convert” them through “instruction and training.”[10] Rather this happened through good neighborly relations, as such relations were not only cultivated with their own people, but also with those from other cultures.

One important factor in acculturation can be what is known as “reciprocal marriage,” here as a matriarchal marriage policy. “Love instead of fight” is a well-known motto in matriarchal societies, as the recent history of indigenous societies shows.[11] This form of acculturation is profound and sustainable and could have occurred between groups of Neolithic newcomers and Mesolithic natives. Mesolithic women gatherers could have partnered Neolithic male farmers and Neolithic female farmers could have partnered Mesolithic male hunters. An asymmetry arose, however, from the fact that the male hunters, because of their nomadic lifestyle, did not stay with the farming women, while the latter did not ←162 | 163→leave their villages and fields. On the other hand, the large, comfortable houses seemed to please a number of Mesolithic women, so that they decided to stay with their new partners and Neolithic female friends and adopted their way of life. This situation has also been proven genetically.[12] Even when these women returned to their Mesolithic brothers—for no one could hold onto them—they brought some Neolithic cultural techniques with them and passed these on to their children: a crucial factor that was not present in the case of the male hunters’ brief encounters with Neolithic female farmers. Thus, acculturation succeeded peacefully on the basis of love and sharing knowledge.

Neolithic Economy in Europe: Unity of Economy and Culture

Although the new way of life, as the “Neolithic Package,” came to Europe through population movements from West Asia, it was further developed, and extremely independently, in the various cultural regions of Southeast Europe, Central Europe, Mediterranean Europe, Atlantic West Europe, and North Europe. We will now look at further development in this order.

Southeast Europe: The First European High Culture

From the 7th millennium, rural settlements developed as land settlements or dwelling mounds (“tells”), first in Thrace and Thessaly. From Thessaly they spread throughout Greece, and migrated up the Danube to Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and the Carpathian Basin (Hungary). Everywhere significant regional cultures formed, occurring rapidly so that Southeast Europe became Neolithic within a few generations. The new economy was based on agriculture, growing different cereals, and on livestock husbandry, especially sheep and goats, but also cattle and pigs, which did not originate from European wild animal species, but had been introduced.[13]

One of the earliest regional cultures was the Sesklo culture (from 6,600) in the fertile plains of Thessaly, to which the sites in southern Greece and the Peloponnese are related (see area 3, Map 3). The Sesklo culture existed until the Late Neolithic (5,500–4,000) under the name of “Dimini culture.” During this long period, the population proliferated so that the land settlements increased and the old dwellings grew into tells of considerable height, similar to the tells in Anatolia. The typical construction consisted of large, rectangular stone houses with a single room. The houses with two rooms—the rooms next to each other in one-storey buildings or above each other in two-storey buildings—served as places for communal gatherings and religious ceremonies. The larger room was dedicated to worship, while the smaller was used as a workshop to produce finely crafted religious objects, especially beautifully painted pottery. The evidence that these were religious places or “temples” comes from the numerous small female figures found in the larger rooms. In addition, in neighboring Macedonia (North Greece), models of such religious houses were discovered with a huge woman’s head or a female

←163 | 164→

upper torso on the roof, so that the whole building appears as a female body (Fig. 1). From this, we can see that the temples were dedicated to a female deity. However, they were not the only sacred places, as each dwelling-house had a courtyard with a hearth, built with a clay dome, and next to it a bench and platform where pots, grinding stones, cereals, cooking utensils as well as many female figurines were found. This indicates that women also used the hearth as a sacred place for domestic rituals.[14]

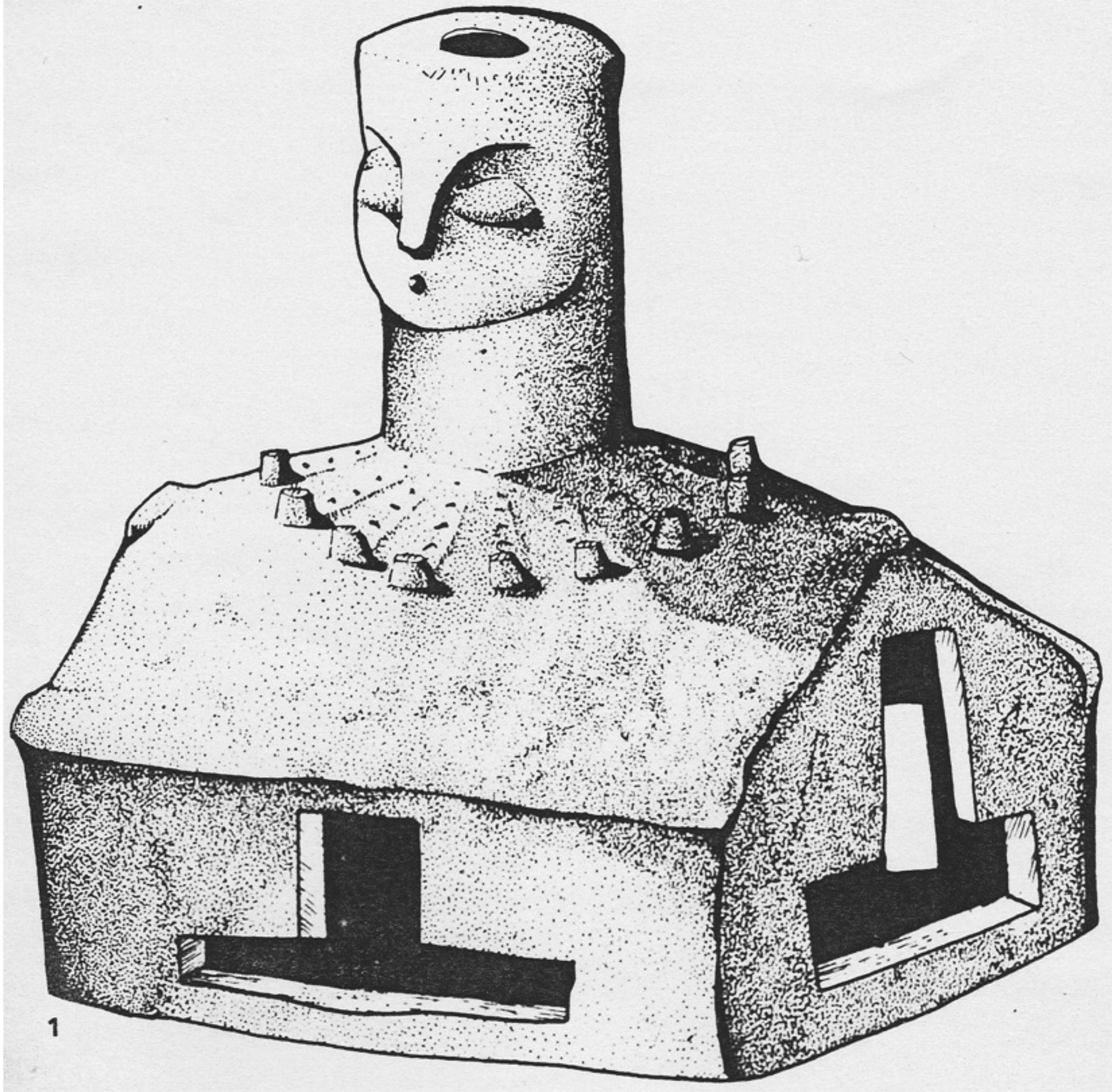

Fig. 1: Clay model of a temple in the shape of a goddess (Macedonia, bout 6,000 BCE)

From 6,300, the Neolithic farming people who had immigrated from Thessaly and Thrace settled in the valleys and plains of the Balkans and along the Danube. The Danube cultures formed (see area 4, Map 3), the culture of Starčevo in Serbia being particularly significant.[15] These immigrating groups used rivers as waterways in an otherwise wooded, inaccessible terrain and they built their settlements on hills and sloping banks above the rivers. Instead of stone, they now built their houses with wood, but not much of these houses has been preserved. They moved up to the “Iron Gate,” the point where the Danube cuts through the border barrier of the South Carpathian Mountains, and where they were stopped by the Mesolithic natives.[16] They mated with these natives, so that the Starčevo culture in the following period spread, with modifications, further north to Transylvania and East Hungary.[17] At the same time, some people also settled south of the Danube in central Bulgaria, favored by its soil and climate. Their millennia-lasting culture of Karanovo gave rise to impressive dwelling hills.[18]

All these cultures were particularly creative in fired and painted pottery, resulting in a variety of forms and styles, as well as producing finely modeled human and animal figurines through their sculptural art. It was women who originated a golden age of pottery and sculpture in the Balkan Neolithic, for they had always been the potters and artists. The archaeological evidence for this has been found in women’s graves, containing a collection of tools used to polish, engrave, and paint pottery,[19] as well as models of temples that exclusively depict women making pottery at temple workshops. Around 4,000 they invented the first rotating device for pottery, later on becoming the mechanical potter’s wheel.[20] These arts were passed down through generations from mothers to daughters, and they were accompanied by magical-religious ideas—as can be seen in the pottery of traditional Berber women, preserving an ancient culture.[21] In general, these cultures reflect a religious intensity that lasted until the end of this period in the Balkans. At the same time, the settlements have no fortifications that point to military land appropriation or defense.[22]

←165 | 166→In the Middle Neolithic and in the “Copper Stone Age” of the Late Neolithic Era (Chalcolithic, approx. 5,000-3,500), the cultures in Southeast Europe developed at a fast pace. Not only was the population doubling and tripling thanks to a secure and diverse food supply, but also new technologies came into use. Inspired by wide-ranging communication relations reaching as far as Asia Minor, metallurgy started with copper from 5,000 and increased in the following millennium.[23] In West Asia, before the 8th millennium, copper was already being worked like stone, using forging technology, and making jewelry from it (in PPN B). From the 6th millennium onward, people began to melt the metal to produce larger objects using casting techniques. After the first stimulation from Anatolia, an autonomous copper metallurgy, independent of West Asia, continued in Southeast Europe, not least thanks to the rich copper ore deposits in the Carpathians. Early metallurgical centers formed in Bulgaria and Romania, in Serbia and in the Hungarian Carpathian Basin.[24] Now ax blades, shaft-hole axes and chisels were being produced, as well as forging gold and silver. From Hungary, copper production along the Danube reached Bavaria and Central Europe (3,800–3,500), while at the same time western Central Europe was influenced by Italy, where the copper metallurgy had arrived from the Aegean (3,200–2,900).[25]

It is noteworthy that copper, silver and gold were used only for jewelry and ritual and prestige objects, which served as coveted gifts, too. Copper objects could not be used as weapons, not even as tools, because they were softer than stone tools and not superior to them. This means that the new copper processing was only a by-product and did not result in any new economic or social order. Things made of copper were merely a new luxury item, which was passed on through the communication networks.[26] Also the famous Ice Man, found in an Austrian glacier, had a copper ax with him when he was walking along a pass over the Alps (around 3,300). This demonstrates that he had prestige, but hardly “power and domination”—which are two quite different things.[27] Here ←166 | 167→the problem becomes clear of naming whole cultural epochs after their materials, which can be very misleading, instead of naming them according to more important criteria such as the social order.[28]

Mining and metallurgy were part of men’s activities, and were also accompanied by religious beliefs. This can be seen in the fact that, even in later times, goddesses up to the Christian Mary were worshiped as patron saints of the mining industry.[29] The reason is that, in early beliefs, it was divine Mother Earth who produced and gave the richness of metals from her womb. Blacksmiths were considered to be magicians, as they were able to transform metals and had secret knowledge to do so. According to the worldview of that time, they were able to be attributed great religious prestige without this corresponding to any real power position.[30]

Of all the Late Neolithic cultures in Southeast Europe, the Vinča culture in Serbia was the richest.[31] Through copper mining and far-reaching communication and exchange networks, some Vinča settlements grew to the size of a city occupying 25–30 hectares, while one city covered 80 ha and another even 100 ha.[32] Compared to this, the early West Asian cities like Άin Ghazal (15 ha) and Çatal Höyük (13.5 ha) look rather modest, while the early dynastic cities in Mesopotamia did not even reach the size of the latter. Here we are witnessing the first urban high cultures in Europe.

←167 | 168→The Vinča culture was even surpassed by the northeastern Cucuteni-Tripolje culture (4,800–3,500), which stretched from Romania to western Ukraine and the Dnieper River. Its settlement density in western Ukraine eclipsed all previous ←168 | 169→settlements, and their cities achieved huge dimensions, consisting of 500–2,000 large houses and covering areas of 250–450 ha. They were laid out symmetrically in ten to twelve concentric circles or ellipses and the number of their inhabitants could range from 4,000 to 10,000 people (Fig. 2 a, b).[33] This densification process is extraordinary, and we will come back to the reasons later on.

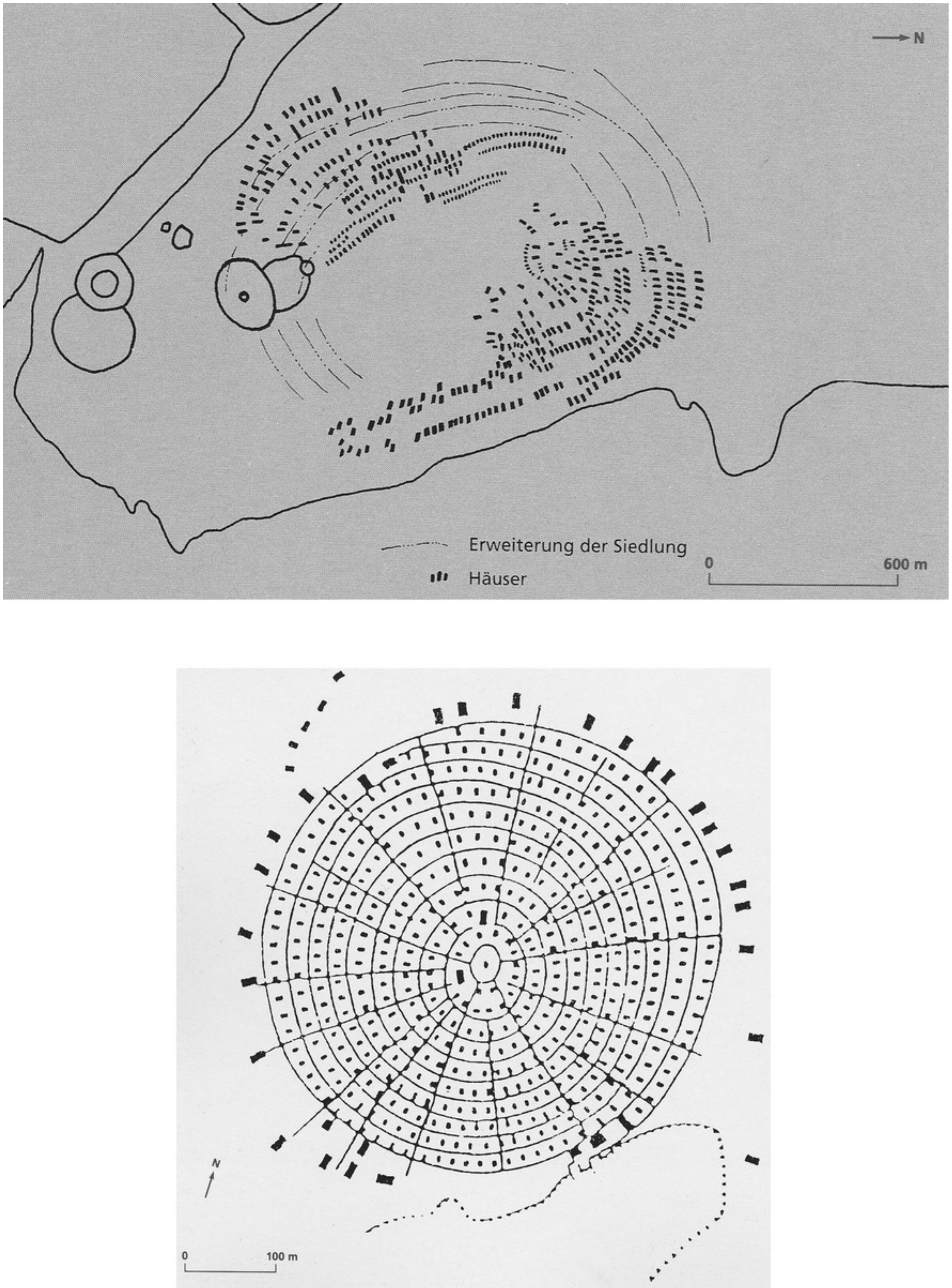
N
Erweiterung der Siedlung
Häuser
0
600 m
N
0
100 m

Fig. 2 a, b:Cities of the Neolithic Cucuteni-Tripolje culture (Ukraine)

Central Europe: Longhouses and Giant Circles

The early Neolithic period in Central Europe ranges from 5,500 to 5,000 (6th millennium), therefore beginning more than a millennium later than in Southeast Europe. It is characterized by the Linear-band Pottery culture (in German: “Linienbandkeramik,” abbr. LBK), the name deriving from the pottery’s band-like decorative patterns. Its oldest phase emerged in the central Danubian basin from the Starčevo-Körös culture in Hungary, although from the very beginning it developed its unique feature. It spread throughout Central Europe in an area from Lake Balaton to the Rhine. In the following period, it expanded even further until finally occupying an area of 2,000 km, stretching from the Paris Basin and Normandy almost to the Black Sea (see area 5, Map 3).[34] Despite this vast expanse, the style of their stone and ceramic artifacts remained consistent, suggesting the culture spread quite rapidly. The very mild and rainy climate of Central Europe, as well as the extensive network of waterways, and the fertile banks along rivers and lakes, which were extremely favorable for cultivation, resulted in this proliferation. Thus, nothing impaired the rapid expansion of the LBK with its ethnically closely related groups.

They lived in peaceful coexistence with the Mesolithic populations and soon shared goods with each other. Crops, dairy products, young pigs and cattle were exchanged for furs, honey, and wild fruits. Even at the very edges of their expansion, the LBK people were in symbiotic contact with other cultures, such as the transhumant shepherds in West Europe, with their herds of goats and sheep, and the people of North Europe who lived off hunting and fishing.[35]

In many aspects, the LBK is considered the “classical Neolithic culture,” and it is one of the best-studied. Its numerous settlements and cemeteries, their stable crops and livestock farming, but especially their imposing longhouses have impressed archaeologists from the very beginning. These longhouses are enormous and have no precursors, the largest being up to 30–45 m long and up to 10 m wide. All houses were built from rows of wooden posts, with the three inner rows supporting the roof. The walls were wattle-and-daub, and the pitched saddle-roofs were covered with bundles of reed, straw, or bark (Fig. 3 a, b). Both sexes ←170 | 171→ were involved in the construction of a house, so the walls and roof were probably the traditional work of women, who also built the wattle-and-daub ovens inside the house.[36] These longhouses were placed, unconnected, in groups or rows, the space between serving as a courtyard for manual work. It is noteworthy that they were all aligned in an astronomical line, from northwest to southeast, with the main entrance to the southeast.[37]

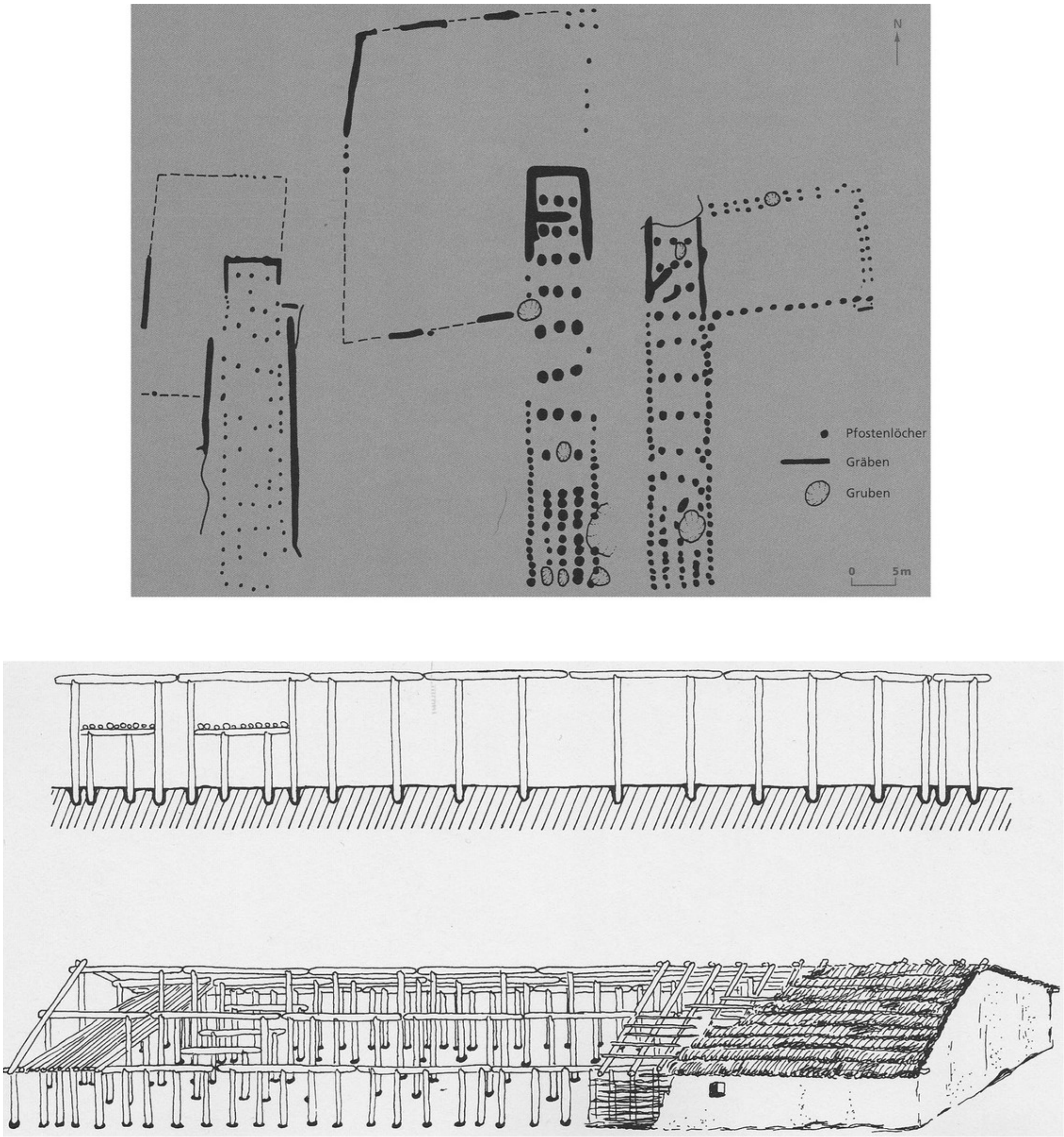

Fig. 3a, b: Rows of posts of long houses, and schematic model of a longhouse, LBK culture

The settlements were occupied for a long time, each farmstead being used by several generations. However, the house itself was inhabited for only one generation, each new generation tearing down the old house, and using the long posts to build a new one next to it. It was obviously a custom that a new generation should build a new house. However, the ruins of the ancestor's houses, now sprouting bushes and trees, were left side by side. In this way, the descendants could literally see the lineage of their female and male ancestors, reflecting a genealogy that was respectfully preserved.[38]

The fields were close by the houses, where women grew crops using a multitude of wooden devices. They used not only simple hoes, but also spades, and hand plows to make furrows. Archaeologists, however, assume that people already worked with oxen and wooden hooked plows that still could not turn over the clods of earth, but could dig deep furrows into the ground. This was the beginning of agriculture with the plow, which was fully developed in the Late Neolithic.[39] Traces of plowing by the Cortaillod culture have been found in Valais (Switzerland).[40] This shows that the idea of patriarchy rising with a plow economy is wrong, as it did not happen so simply. The cultivation of vegetable crops and fruit trees also formed a part of this economy, as well as growing flax. This was in the hands of the women, who made light linen clothing from the flax fibers by spinning and weaving.[41]

There were not only single farmsteads and small groups of houses, but also large settlements with a few thousand inhabitants. In some areas the population ←171 | 172→could be very dense, depending, on the one hand, on significant flint deposits, and on the other hand on important centers of communication and sharing. On the Bavarian Danube, for example, valuable stones such as greenstone and marble, graphite for pottery, and amber from the Baltic Sea were exchanged as luxury goods for salt from the Salzburg Alps, and Spondylus mussels from the Mediterranean, which were still very popular because of their vulva shape. These goods were not traded for profit but shared mutually as gifts during visits or regional festivals, in order to strengthen friendship relations.[42] This was how such goods could continue traveling for hundreds of kilometers without there being any particular trader group—a pattern already known from the Palaeolithic epoch.

It is noteworthy that the Neolithic longhouses are astonishingly similar in their construction wherever they occur. To make this standard possible, the people of the LBK must have had a numbering system, and methods of calculation, geometry, and measuring, as well as special construction equipment such as levers, winches and direction-finding apparatus, which suggests a high level of carpentry.[43] This indicates comprehensive technical knowledge, but even more so the large circular earthwork enclosures or “roundels,” evidence that Neolithic mathematics and geometry had reached a climax. The construction of circular earthwork enclosures began in the LBK and continued over the 5th and 4th millennium (Middle Neolithic). These structures consisted of several concentrically arranged round or oval banks with ditches. In most cases there were timber palisade rings in the middle, these ditches and palisades being interspersed with earth bridges as entrances and exits.

The oldest example, recently discovered, is a roundel combined with a 40-m longhouse of the earliest LBK type (6th millennium).[44] In this house the middle row of posts was missing, so that people could pass through. From the northwestern side of the house, they arrived directly into a circular earthwork enclosure, with a palisade ring of 30 m in diameter, surrounded by a wide external ditch. In the middle there was a hill, and beneath this a single grave—not of a “Big Man” but of a six-month-old infant (Fig. 4). This grouping was rightly called a “temple complex,” and people walked through the longhouse in processions to the circular earthwork enclosure.[45]

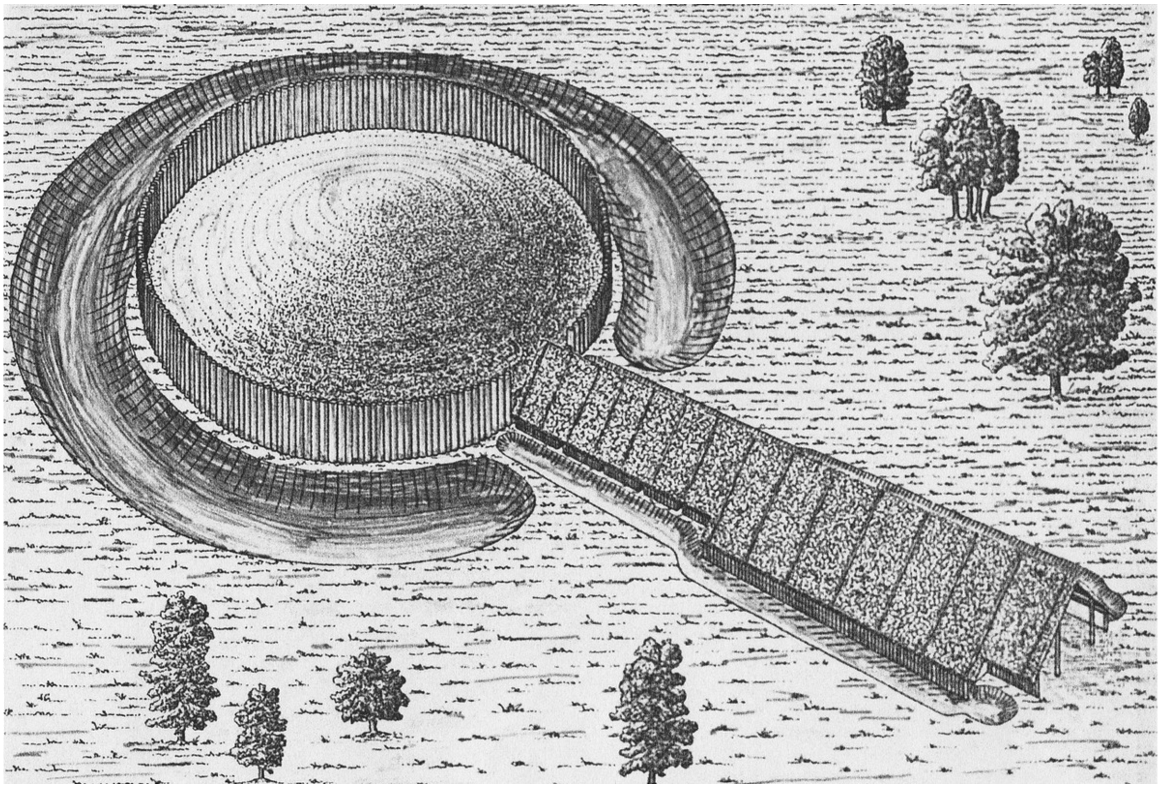

Fig. 4: Longhouse with circular earthwork enclosure, the latter having a grave mound at the center, LBK culture (Germany)

←172 | 173→Circular earthwork enclosures are otherwise not connected to buildings, and they are rare. But in Southeast Germany there are six of them in succession. Dated 4,800–4,600, they are more than one and a half millennia older than the famous Stonehenge in South England. The confluence of the rivers Isar and Danube in East Bavaria forms an almost isosceles triangle whose longitudinal axis is 30 km. Exactly on this longitudinal axis, in a line from east to west like pearls on a string, are six large circular earthwork enclosures.[46] The oldest has a diameter of 110 m, and is located on the Danube; going west towards the Isar, the roundels become smaller, but still have a diameter of up to 60 m and some 5 m deep ditches. With these dimensions, even by today's standards they can be considered extraordinary buildings. The archaeological surprise was even greater when it was discovered that these large roundels are mathematically accurate, and ←173 | 174→their four gates astronomically aligned with the cardinal lines of the solar year.[47] But none of these earthwork enclosures is exactly circular, which would have been quite easy for the builders; instead they were built in the shape of a compressed circle, an ellipse or oval. The structure at Meisternthal is a perfect oval, so precisely aligned that, through the two gates in the east-west direction, not only the sunrise and sunset at the equinoxes of spring and autumn can be observed, but also—alternately standing at the two focal points of the oval—the sunrise and sunset on the summer and winter solstices.[48] This clearly shows that they are "giant clocks," that is, observatories and calendar buildings.

At the same time, they were also giant temples where people gathered to celebrate their community and religion. Nearby were settlements, and sometimes the houses were enclosed along with the roundels by kilometer-long, exterior banks and ditches (Fig. 5). However, these structures could not be the work of people from a single village; instead, they had been built and were used by the people of one region altogether. The religious function of the monuments is indicated by finds of broken female figurines, pottery shards and remnants of banquets, as well as animal burials and numerous horned cattle skulls, but especially human burials inside the monuments or in the ditches.[49] Therefore such hypotheses as "cattle corrals" or even "warlike fortifications" can safely be ruled out. The large earthwork at Herxheim (Baden-Wuerttemberg), which was also claimed to have a war function, contained the remains of 500 people in a secondary burial, proving it to be a temple of supraregional importance. A "skull nest" was also found there, that is, the burial of skulls in a group.[50] Skull burial is a custom that was not only widespread (from West Asia to Europe), but also very ancient, as shown by Palaeolithic finds and the Ofnet Cave (Germany) from the Mesolithic.

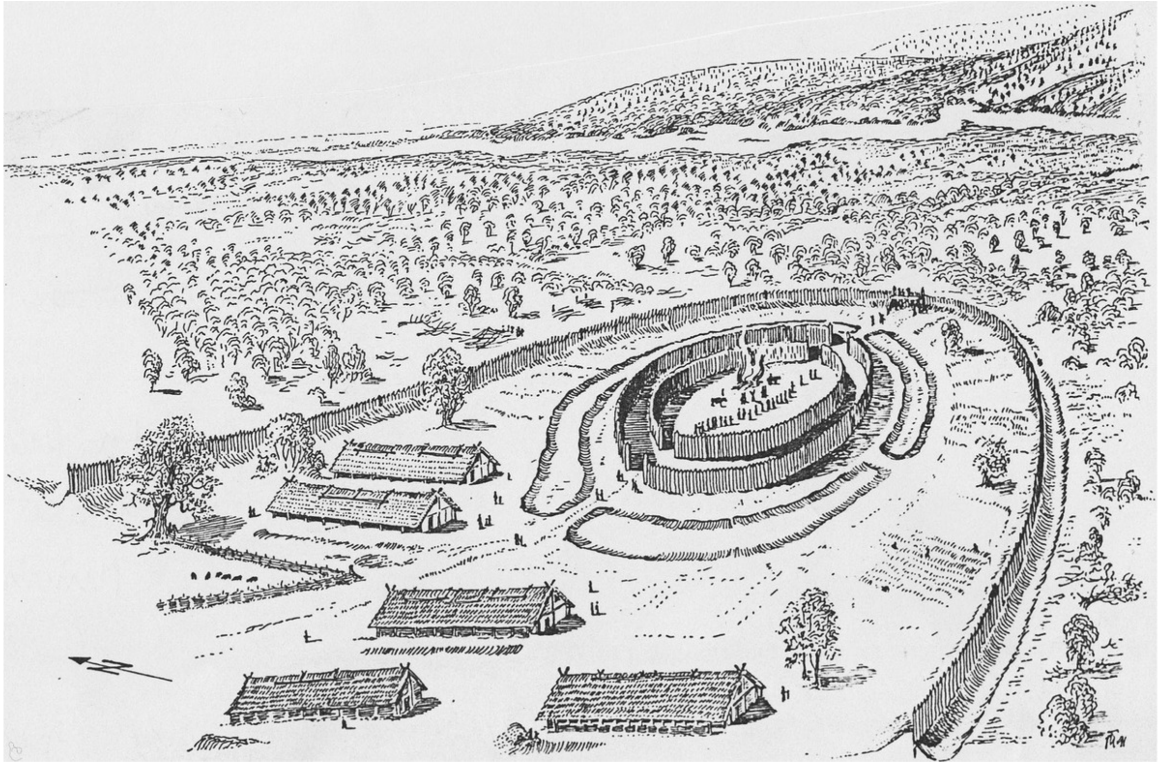

Fig. 5: The circular earthwork enclosure of Künzing-Unternberg in Bavaria, reconstruction (Germany)

Circular earthwork enclosures are not only known from Germany, but were found in the entire region of the LBK, a culture that was richer and more complex than previously assumed. It is a remarkably sophisticated culture across the whole of Central Europe.

←174 | 175→

The end of this splendid early Neolithic culture is still a major cause of discussion. In its final period, there had been a sharp rise in population. This is supposed to be the reason for the occasional acts of violence which occurred at that time, as shown by the massacre graves of Talheim near Heilbronn and of Schöneck-Kilianstädten near Frankfurt. A third “massacre” find of Schletz-Asparn in Austria is also mentioned, but this case is dubious (all around 5,000).[51] However, this reason is highly implausible because it states that a large number of people automatically results in more conflicts—as is the case in the overcrowded cities of today.[52] However, other much more densely populated areas in the Neolithic period without any massacre prove the opposite.

←175 | 176→Even more dramatic is the view of those who follow the theory of ubiquitous war and, based on two or three limited events, talk about “collective violence on a large scale” and the “collapse of the LBK,” said to have “disappeared bloodily in the first armed conflicts.”[53] This is surprising, as war weapons which were used exclusively for killing humans had not appeared yet. The attacks were carried out with hunting devices such as bows and arrows, and with normal tools such as adzes. War theorists fail to demonstrate what this “collapse” looked like, and why this so-called “first war” came about? There is no archaeological evidence of a crisis-like, socio-cultural rupture between the LBK and the following cultures.[54]

However, there was a decrease in LBK sites.[55] This does not necessarily amount to a population decline, as people might have left the old settlements, changing their place of residence. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the construction of circular earthwork enclosures, which began in the LBK, was carried on into the following millennia, continuously and more perfectly. Likewise, most burial customs as well as pottery forms remained the same, the only change being the ornamentation technique, for ex. in the Prick-band Pottery culture (in German: “Stichbandkeramik,” abbr. SBK).[56] After a period of interruption, even the longhouses were built again, appearing in the Middle Neolithic in some regional cultures, albeit in a different style with a length up to 65 m. In some areas of Central Europe, they were merged into large settlements.[57]

The issue therefore is not why the “first war” arose—which did not exist at all—but how to explain the isolated feuds, which wiped out entire villages, and the changes that led to the Middle Neolithic (about 5,000–4,500). It is of particular interest here that, during this time, a period of drought occurred that ended the mild and humid climate of the previous millennia. From 5,150 the climate was characterized by a steady decline in rainfall, including extreme anomalies (in 5,130 and 5,105).[58] This is precisely the time of the outbreaks of violence. It is not hard to imagine that a series of bad harvests resulted in life becoming very insecure, so that settlements were left and aggression arose that provoked such desperate acts. It is, however, astonishing that, despite the climatic deterioration, such feuds were not greater because the number of these attacks, measured in centuries and over a very large region, is extremely low. Therefore, this Neolithic epoch must still be described as fundamentally peaceful, despite the riots.

The long-lasting drought was by no means restricted to Europe. Together with subsequent climate fluctuations the impact was much more dramatic in West Asia, which had consequences for Southeast Europe—as we will see later. Compared to this, the consequences in Central Europe were relatively mild, so that most Early Neolithic traditions could be taken up again in the Middle Neolithic. However, the uniformity of the LBK culture disintegrated. Various regional cultures took its place, expanding considerably the populated region.[59]

In the Late Neolithic (4,400–2,800), changes in the economy were radical, and new regional cultures emerged.[60] People no longer relied exclusively on the old settlement areas alongside the rivers, but penetrated deeper into the forests, and, complementing the waterways, overland routes were opened up. The construction of longhouses ceased; only small, less massive houses were built. That was intentional, as the period of residence was short, and villages were moved after 5–10, at most 20 years—in sharp contrast to the LBK settlements that were inhabited for centuries.[61] The plausible explanation is that, in the Late Neolithic, extensive slash-and-burn cultivation was practiced in the forests because space had to be cleared in the boreal jungle. After a few years, the soil was depleted, and the fields were abandoned again to create new ones elsewhere.[62] This led to the periodic moving of settlements and an unstable life.

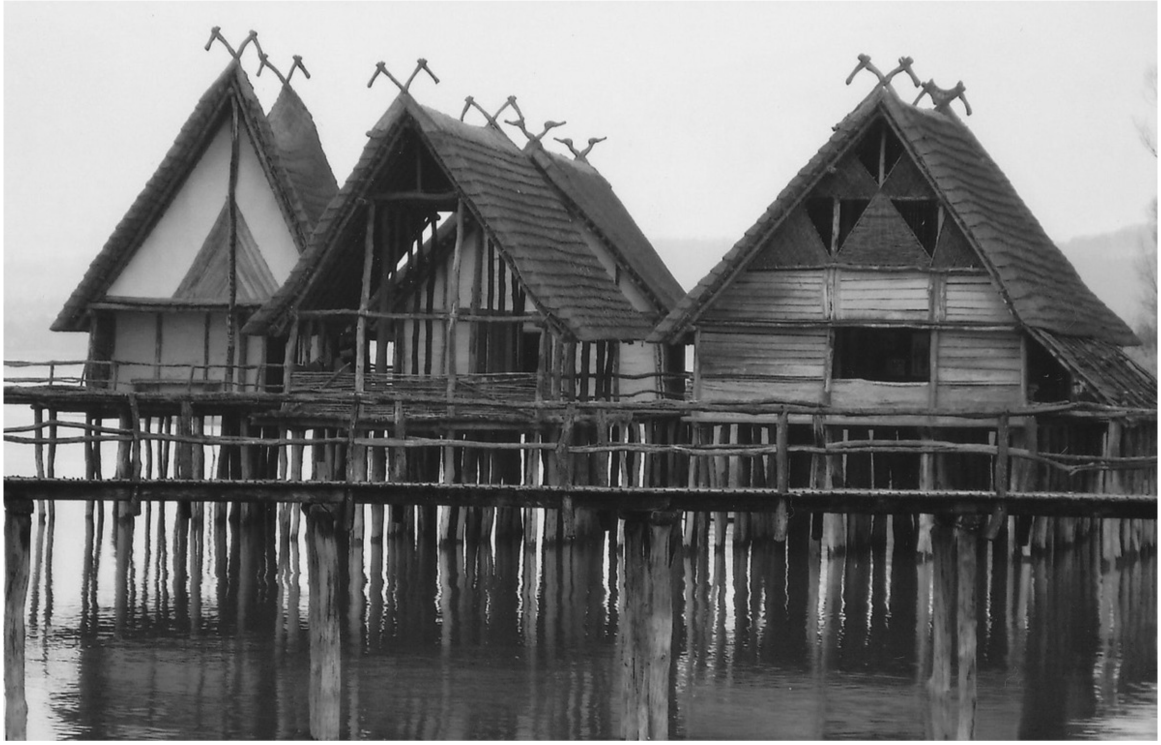

Fig. 6: Pile-dwellings in Unteruhldingen, Lake Constance (Germany) (Photo by the author)

The southern and northern Alpine foreland was now being inhabited as well, creating unique lakeside settlements (Fig. 6). Perhaps people found it safer to live by lakes because their water supply did not run out, and to this end they invented new building techniques. On the larger Alpine lakes, villages were built on piles in the shallows to absorb the fluctuations in the water level, whereas on ←177 | 178→ smaller lakes they were built on the shore on soft ground.[63] Water and moorland conserved their remains, so that today about 1,000 of such settlements could still be found.[64] They formed regional cultures around the Alps, such as the Lagozza culture in North Italy, the Ergolzwiler and Cortaillod cultures in Switzerland and the Pfyner culture in South Germany. However, they were by no means isolated, but were in contact not only by waterways, but even through passes across the Alps.[65] It is amazing how long this type of housing lasted: pile dwelling settlements were built from 5,000 in the south of the Alps, around 4,300 on the northern rim of the Alps and they lasted until the late Bronze Age around 850, ←178 | 179→that is, over four thousand years.[66] The reason probably lies in the stable water supply from the lakes. However, the settlements in these regions were also relocated approximately every 10 years and single houses more often.[67]

South Europe: Temples and "fairy houses"

Neolithic culture in southern Mediterranean Europe flourished centuries earlier than it developed in Central Europe. Here, the spread of the Neolithic way of life was associated with seafaring, with people being able to continually improve their nautical skills along the coasts and then from island to island. They even dared cross the open sea over shorter distances, as can be seen in the very early Neolithic settlements of Cyprus and Crete. From the west coast of the Balkans and the offshore islands, especially Corfu (before 6,500), they crossed the Adriatic Sea and, in 6,500, had already settled in South Italy and Sicily. In the tableland behind the Gargano peninsula (Tavoliere in South Italy), the highest concentration of Neolithic settlements in Italy was found, and almost a thousand sites were identified. Both the houses and settlements were surrounded by horseshoe-shaped ditches. The peasant women had brought their sheep from the Balkans, and produced a very special type of pottery called Impresso. The vessels were well fired and decorated with impressions of shells and fingernails or stamps. For centuries, this style went on evolving in Puglia, Calabria and Sicily, but Impresso pottery has also been found in the countries around the Adriatic. This characterizes the area as an interrelated cultural region, the Adriatic Neolithic (see Area 6, Map 3).[68]

The island group of Malta, which is not far from Sicily, also belongs to the region of Impresso pottery. It was already settled in the 6th millennium, when the Maltese islands were still lush and green, and over time a unique island culture developed here.[69] This was due to the coral and Globigerina limestone, which is easy to extract from the quarries, and which is very durable after drying.[70] From this stone, the Neolithic builders erected the monumental temples for which Malta is still famous today. On the two main islands Malta and Gozo there are ←179 | 180→45 known temples, most of them on Malta. They were built out of massive cubes, each weighing 30–50 tons.

From the early stages of the Maltese culture, archaeologists found egg-shaped graves carved into the rock with the bones of the dead. In large format, this type of grave architecture continued in the famous Hal Saflieni hypogeum, where a multitude of egg-shaped caves had been embedded in several floors underground—so far only three floors have been excavated. The hypogeum, at the beginning, has an entrance hall and an oracle room, the vaults of which are decorated with meaningful ornaments of red ochre, and the rooms have excellent acoustics. The burial caves contained bones and rich grave goods, making this underground building an extraordinary mortuary temple, without precedent in Neolithic Europe.

All aboveground temples from that era typically have no magnificent exterior facades and do not rise imposingly high into the sky. Instead, they were embedded within artificial mounds, which were enclosed by a wall in order to support them. The small, oldest temples, which were built in the form of a cloverleaf, clearly show the egg shape of the graves.[71] The large temples are also entirely curved and, being embedded in earth, they are still cave-like. On entering, you immediately realize that it is all about the hollow shape, about the interior—like the temples of Göbekli Tepe in West Asia. The Maltese hollow shape clearly has female characteristics, as the classical temples have five apses, representing a head, wide breasts and expansive hips. A crescent-shaped courtyard lies in front of it, and the entrance from the courtyard to the temples goes through the vulva, analogous to the female body. The largest temple of this kind is the Ġgantija temple on the neighboring island of Gozo. There is not just one, but two adjacent temples, both built up with huge cubes and of the same symbolic design. The twin temples of Mnajdra in Malta, too, whose size is more human than gigantic, clearly show the female body shape (Fig. 7 a, b).

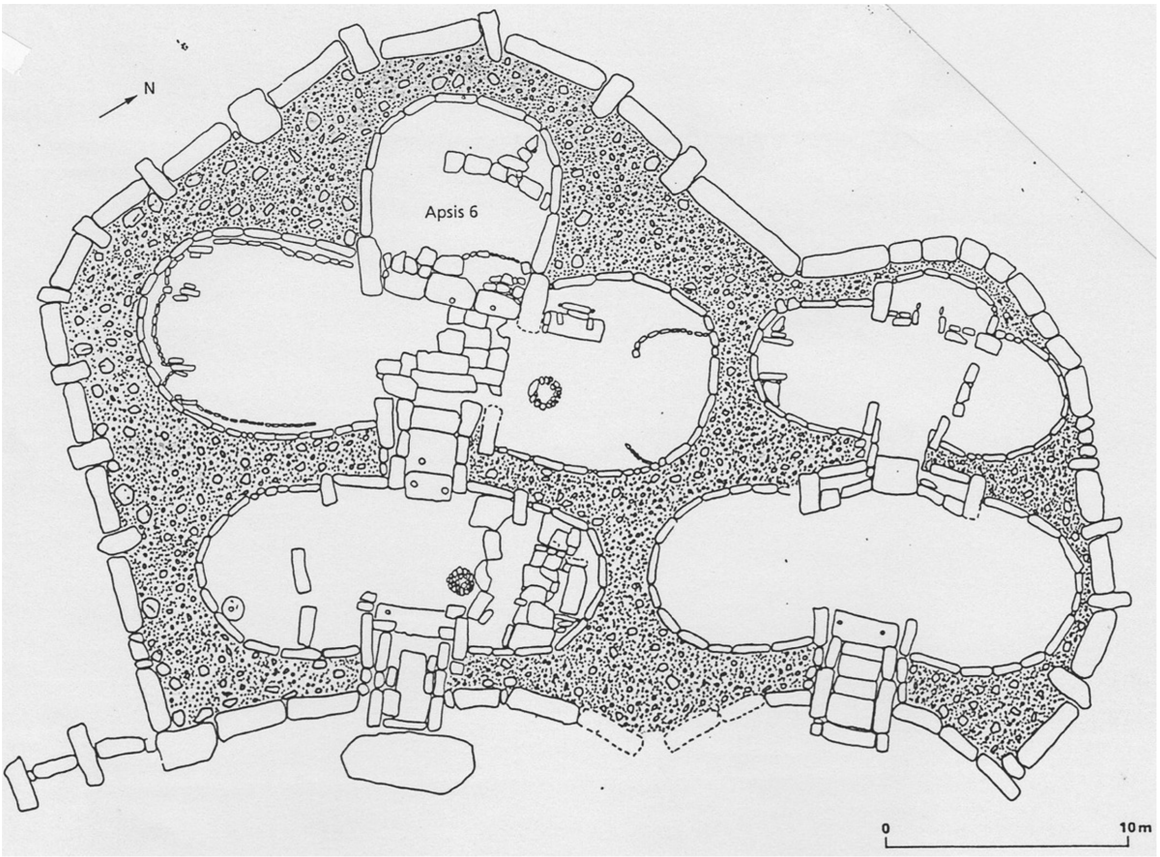
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Fig. 7a: Plan view of the Ġgantija temples on the island of Gozo (Malta)

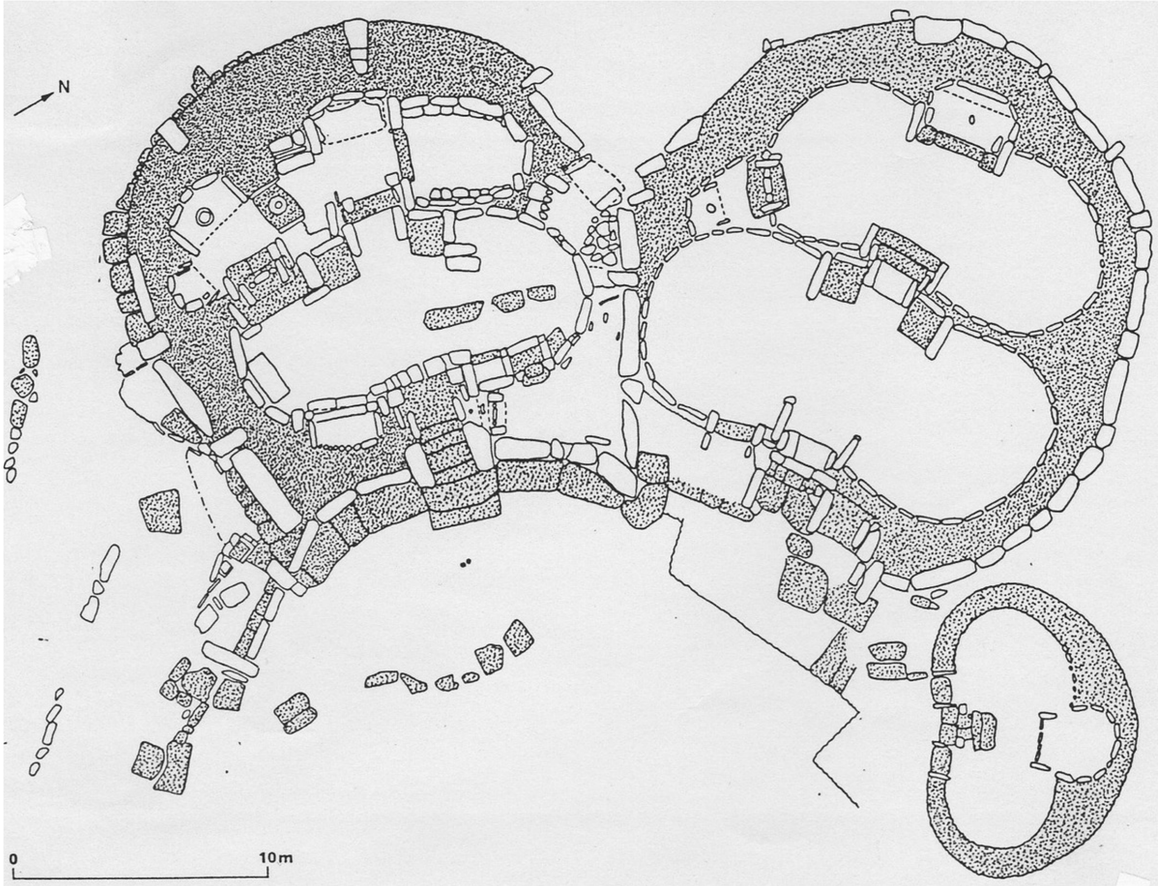


Fig. 7b: Plan view of the Mnajdra temples (Malta)

←180 | 181→Special attention should be paid to the pattern of little holes in certain places in the temples. The Mnajdra temples are positioned with a panoramic view right on the cliffs above the sea, just beneath the temple Haġar Qim. In Haġar Qim there is an altar consisting of a triangle stone, completely dotted with finger-sized dimples. This stone symbolizes the female pubic triangle, so the dot pattern probably emphasized the holiest spot. In one of the Mnajdra temples there are two more very large female triangular stones flanking the entrance to a chamber. The ←181 | 182→entrance is skillfully constructed out of two successive trilithon gates, completely covered by the dot patterns just like the two triangular stones.[72] This emphasized the extraordinary holiness of this part of the temple (Fig. 8).

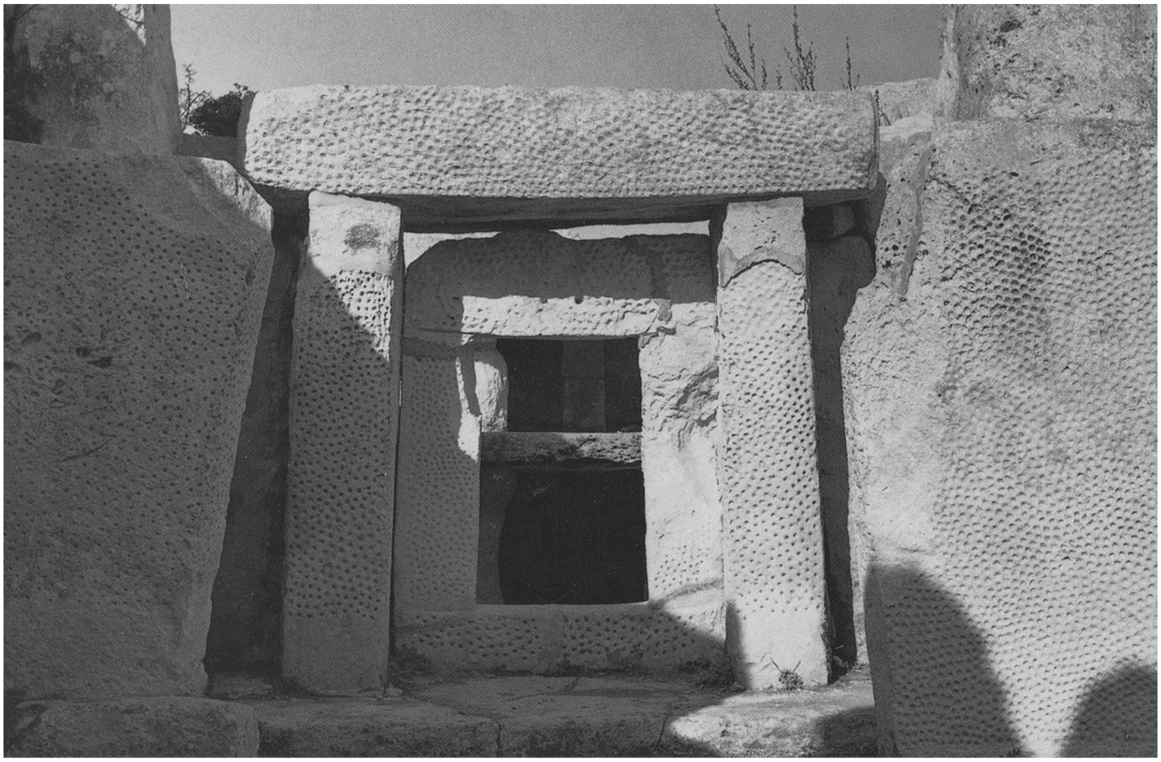


Fig. 8: Temple Mnajdra: entrance to a holy chamber (Photo by Ine Guckert)

The latest and richest temple structures are the Tarxien temples of Hal Saflieni, where even three of these female cavities are nested one after the other, although with this layout some clarity was lost. Skillful reliefs of spirals, tendrils and animals, as well as small and large sculptures of the “Fat Goddess” complete the picture. These female sculptures show the same fullness of body as the temples’ hollow shape, which confirms the body analogy of the structures.

The large islands of Sardinia and Corsica were settled as early as the small Maltese archipelago, and also developed a particular island culture. As in Malta, their diversity does not indicate isolation but many influences brought by seafarers from all directions, as the islands were a favorable stopover en route to the western Mediterranean. The Neolithic culture developed from 6,000 to 3,000, ←182 | 183→mainly in Sardinia, with its own pottery and sculptural art in an uninterrupted sequence. This island prospered thanks to its rich obsidian deposits (Monte Arci).[73]

The Sardinian grave architecture of that period is extraordinary, beginning like in Malta with egg-shaped rock tombs. Hundreds of them were found, with the chambers and corridors becoming increasingly winding, so that rock walls and standing boulders were literally hollowed out. Finally, graves were carved into the rock in the form of dwelling-houses, with gabled roofs and finely carved rafters made of stone, with false columns and architraves supporting the roof, and with paintings on the walls. The later islanders gave them the name “Domus de Janas” because of their smallness, which means “fairy houses” and refers to the Little People, that is, to the women of the Neolithic.[74] During the transition from the 5th to the 4th millennium, grave architecture flourished, indicating a significant increase in population (Ozieri culture). From this time several necropolises were found, containing a variety of underground graves.[75] They have multi-chamber tombs, of which the smaller rooms grouped in a star shape around the main hall with columns, or stepped successively in different directions. The main hall is sometimes so high that several people can stand upright in it while otherwise you have to crawl around in the grave sites. Each of these tombs is a “hypogeum,” an underground mortuary temple, albeit here in small format. They resemble the “fairy houses,” the entrances being modeled into beautiful portals, over which painted bull horns or reliefs of bull heads (bucrania) are emblazoned. Inside, there were also bas-reliefs of bulls’ heads and other symbols as carvings or wall paintings of red ochre, as well as richly decorated pottery and numerous female figurines made from bone, marble and alabaster.[76]

←183 | 184→

The burial customs in Sardinia and Corsica are similar to those of Malta and point back to West Asia. The dead were buried in two phases: only after the excarnation outdoors were the bones and the often-separated skulls deposited in the grave-rooms.[77] In this way tombs had room for a large number of dead, so each can be considered the burial place of an entire clan.

It is noteworthy that both Malta and Sardinia already had megalithic architecture. In Malta, it is the temples, whose cyclopean walls were built in the megalithic style. In Sardinia, this construction style started later with a new type of grave architecture, the “giants’ graves.”[78] These consist of passage tombs under an elongated hill of drystone, where later a crescent-shaped facade of high single stones was added—resulting in the shape of a bull’s head when viewed from above. The highest middle stele has a false door and a small hole to slip through (Fig. 9). This megalithic construction style of Sardinia did not originate here ←184 | 185→ but comes from an immigrant population from the western Mediterranean (East Spain and South France). For megalithic architecture had its origins not only in West Asia, but also in North Africa, the western Mediterranean and in many other cultural regions of the world. The immigrants coexisted peacefully with the native people in Sardinia. The Sardinian myth of the shepherd-princess “Nora” and the sailor “Norace” reflects this. According to this myth, the native people, personifyed in Nora, merged with the newcomers, personifyed in Norace, by inter-marrying, so they could learn from each other. The native people gave the newcomers land and the new settlers taught the natives how to build megaliths. The latter built the “giants’ graves” and constructed circular stone dwellings, from which the later Bronze Age towers developed, whose name “nuraghi” still reminds us of Norace, the founder of the Sardinian megalithic culture.[79]

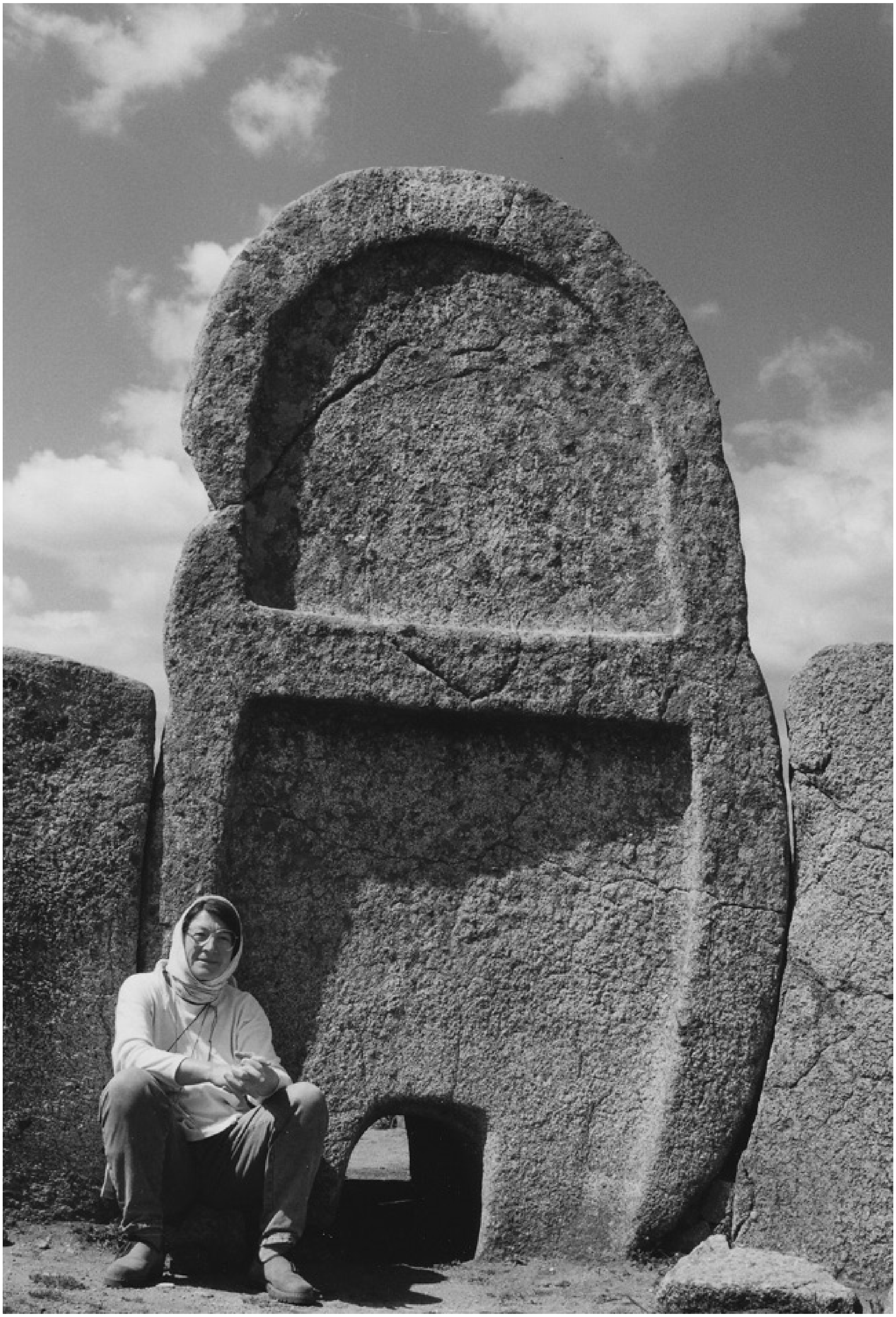


Fig. 9: So-called “giant’s grave,” central stele with false door and hole to slip through (Sardinia) (Photo by Eva-Maria Farin)

Atlantic and Continental West Europe: Megaliths in All Forms

The Neolithic way of life began very early in southwestern Europe, namely in Spain and South France in cave settlements as early as the 8th millennium.[80] Since here the transition to the Neolithic was very slow, Neolithic culture cannot have been suddenly introduced by immigrants. Instead, the Mesolithic natives developed in their own way, which—as in the Palaeolithic—originated in exchange with neighboring North Africa. Groups of immigrants from North Africa, the early Iberians, also started Neolithic cultural development. It was not until the 6th millennium that influences from the Mediterranean arrived, accelerating acculturation into the full Neolithic, as shown by the now emerging Impresso pottery (see area 7, Map 3). In addition to the archaeological findings, rock paintings from the 6th millennium on the southeast coast of Spain document the Neolithic period, as here women can be seen with sickles and knives cultivating the fields, which is their domain (Fig. 10). The men, however, continued with traditional hunting techniques, using bows and arrows.[81] Dancing women and men in a religious scene are also depicted, the women represented taller than the men.[82]

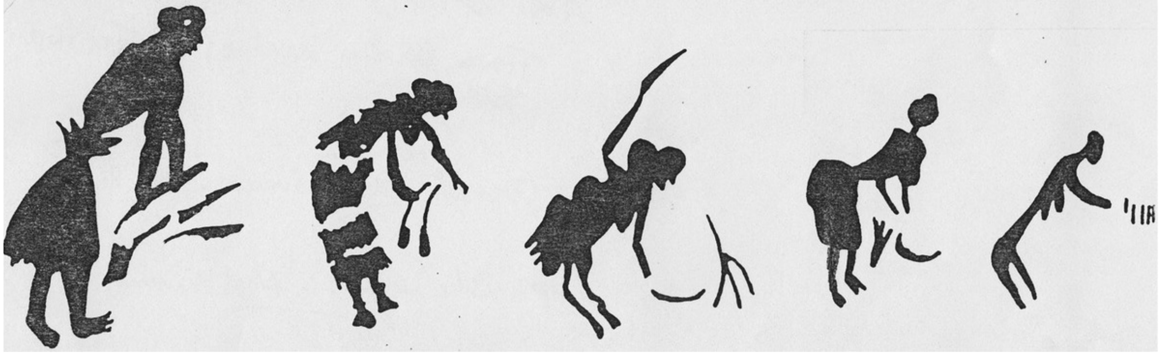


Fig. 10: Women cultivating the fields, rock painting (eastern coast of Spain, 6th mill. BCE)

←185 | 186→Thanks to advanced coastal navigation, the Neolithic culture reached beyond the Mediterranean area and arrived at the Atlantic side of West Europe as far back as the middle of the 6th millennium. From there it spread northwards: from Portugal (from 5,400) along the west coast of France to Brittany (from 5,000), in the 5th millennium, further to Cornwall, South England, Wales and Ireland (from 4,500), in the 4th millennium to Scotland, to the Hebrides and Orkney Islands (from 3,900) (see area 8, Map 3). The beginning of the Neolithic period in South England and Ireland was substantially influenced by the western regions of the Central European LBK culture (from Normandy, France).[83] Neolithization did not only expand along the Atlantic coasts, but also in the interior of West Europe. From 5,200 onward, the interior of the Iberian Peninsula became Neolithic, and in the 5th and 4th millennia, a coherent cultural complex arose, reaching from South France to North Italy and the Swiss lakes (see area 8, Map 3).[84]

The salient feature of Atlantic West Europe at that time is the megalithic architecture prevalent everywhere. West Europe alone has 10,000 megalithic monuments of various kinds.[85] From here, the megalithic architecture spread to other coastal areas, from France to Holland and North Germany, and from there to Denmark and South Sweden. Over a period of more than two millennia (Middle Neolithic to Bronze Age, 5th-3rd millennium), this architecture was ←186 | 187→developed further, also spreading into the interior and evolving in an astonishing variety of forms.

Europe is not the only continent with megalithic culture, it also exists in West and East Asia, India, Africa, South and Central America; in other words, ←187 | 188→worldwide.[86] However, most of the megalithic structures are in Europe. They were central sanctuaries for Neolithic communities in these regions. Stone monuments are particularly abundant in South Portugal and Brittany, including the oldest megalithic tombs which are in the shape of a long barrow (“tumulus”).[87] They originated from an enclosed, sacred area of the size of a longhouse, with a small, wooden funerary house built above a grave. When this funerary house collapsed, more funerary houses followed in the area, and the location of the first grave was marked. Eventually, the entire sacred area was covered with a mound, replacing the previous palisade enclosure with stones. This suggests the tumulus was a longhouse for the dead. In a later construction period, passageways were dug into the long barrows to the place of the ancient graves, each being provided with a funerary chamber of megaliths to prevent further deterioration.[88] An impressive example of this oldest megalithic architecture is the huge tumulus of Barnenez in Brittany (5th millennium), built in the form of a long, flat, three-step pyramid of solid drystone walls containing eleven passage graves (Fig. 11 a, b). Here we can see the conception of a longhouse for the dead turning into the idea of a mountain with caves.

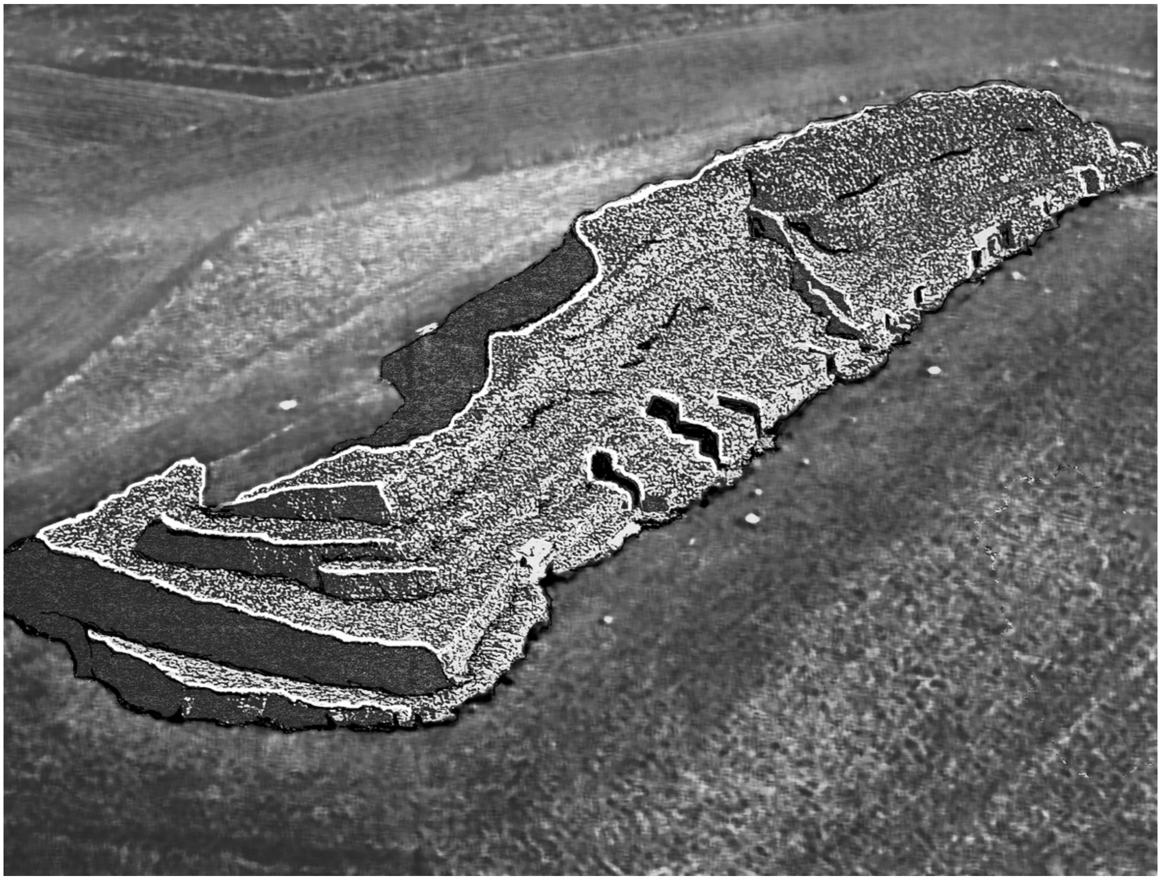


Fig. 11a: Aerial photo of the long barrow/tumulus of Barnenez (Brittany) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

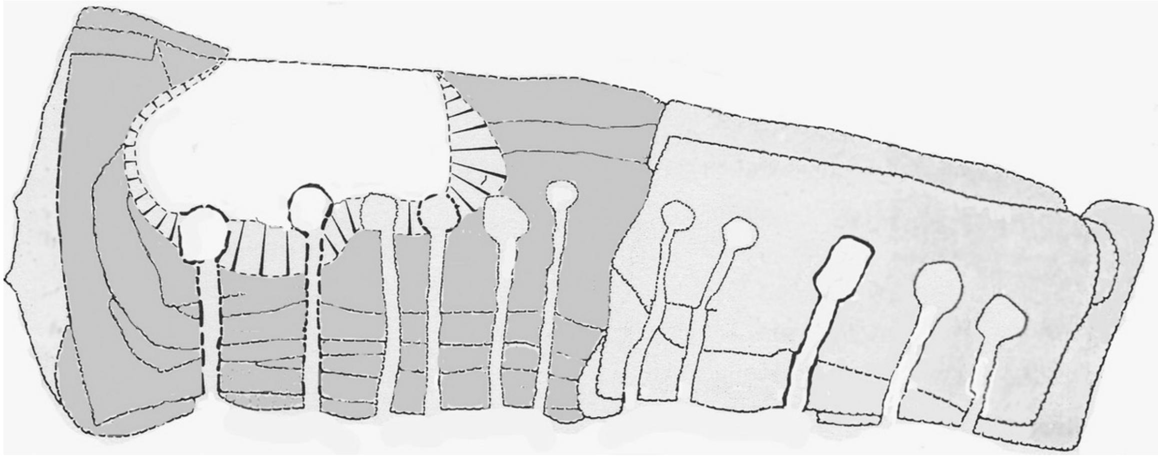


Fig. 11b: Plan view of the long barrow/tumulus of Barnenez with passage graves (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Once the idea was established that the dead could also rest in artificial hills instead of real caves as the womb of Mother Earth, the forms became richer.[89] The most common are burial sites with round hills of drystone walls, covered with earth, which look like the belly of Mother Earth. They could contain one, two or more passage graves and were surrounded by rings of large stones to support them. From thousands of such round burial mounds in Europe, in general only the inner stone chambers are found today, being mistakenly called “dolmen” (in Breton meaning “stone table”), although they had never served as tables or altars. They exist in both small and gigantic sizes from Spain to Ireland and Scotland.[90] On the hills of the Boyne Valley in Ireland there is a large number of such round burial mounds, the largest being those of Knowth, Dowth and New Grange (4th millennium). The reconstructed site of New Grange is the most famous and magnificent, its mighty cairn supported by a white stone cladded wall (Fig. 12 a). Above the entrance is a light opening, which captures the sun’s rays on the winter solstice and projects them through the 20-m-long corridor into the depths of the grave—both an astronomical and symbolic matter at the same time, meaning the return of light and rebirth of life. Exactly at the point where the sun’s rays fall is a rock engraving of a triple spiral, an age-old symbol of coming, going and returning of light and life (Fig. 12 b). An 8 m high dome in the “false

←188 | 189→

vault” style rises above the cruciform burial chambers and the central space in the middle.[91] This central space is by no means narrow, so that a group of people could celebrate religious rituals here. On the outside the huge cairn is surrounded by a ring of recumbent blocks of stone, some of which are decorated all over with spirals and other motifs (see Fig. k, Series A of Chapter 3). Since they were first created, megalithic structures have had such rock engravings, and these signs and symbols are codes for the worldview of the people of the time, which they inscribed in their holy places. The richest in this respect is the passage grave of Gavrinis (Gulf of Morbihan, Brittany), where ←189 | 190→each stone in the corridor is engraved from top to bottom (Fig. 13, see also Fig. j, Series A of Chapter 3).[92]

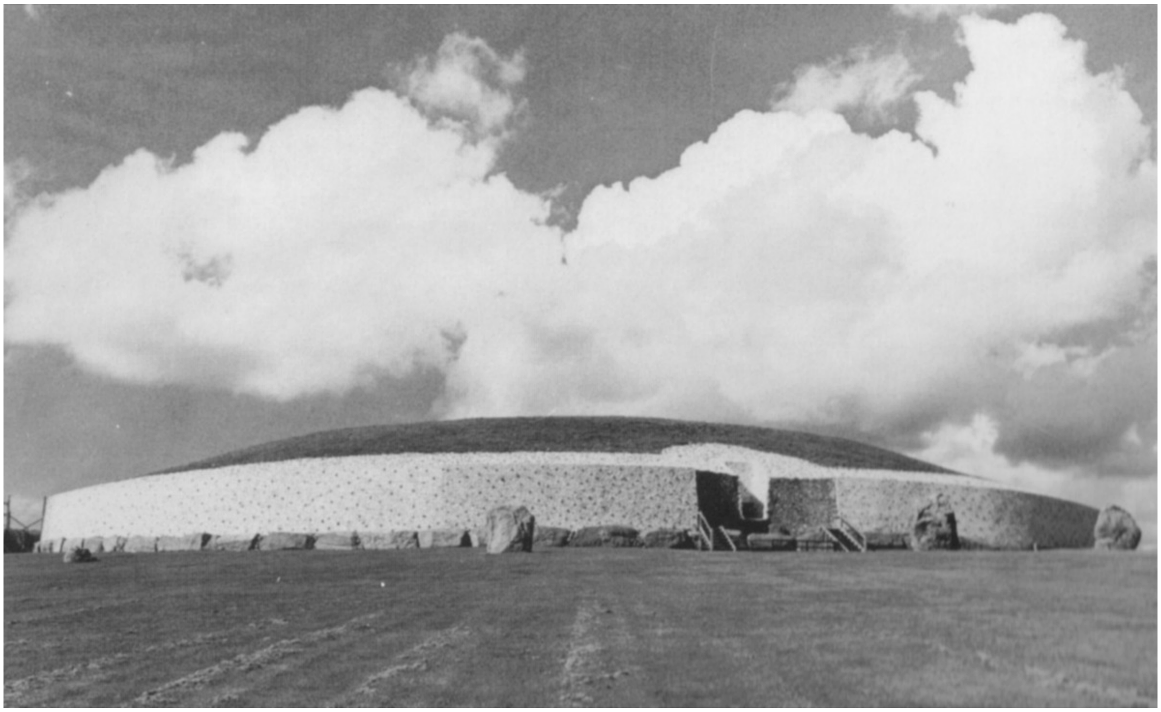


Fig. 12a: Reconstructed round burial mound of the New Grange tomb (Ireland)

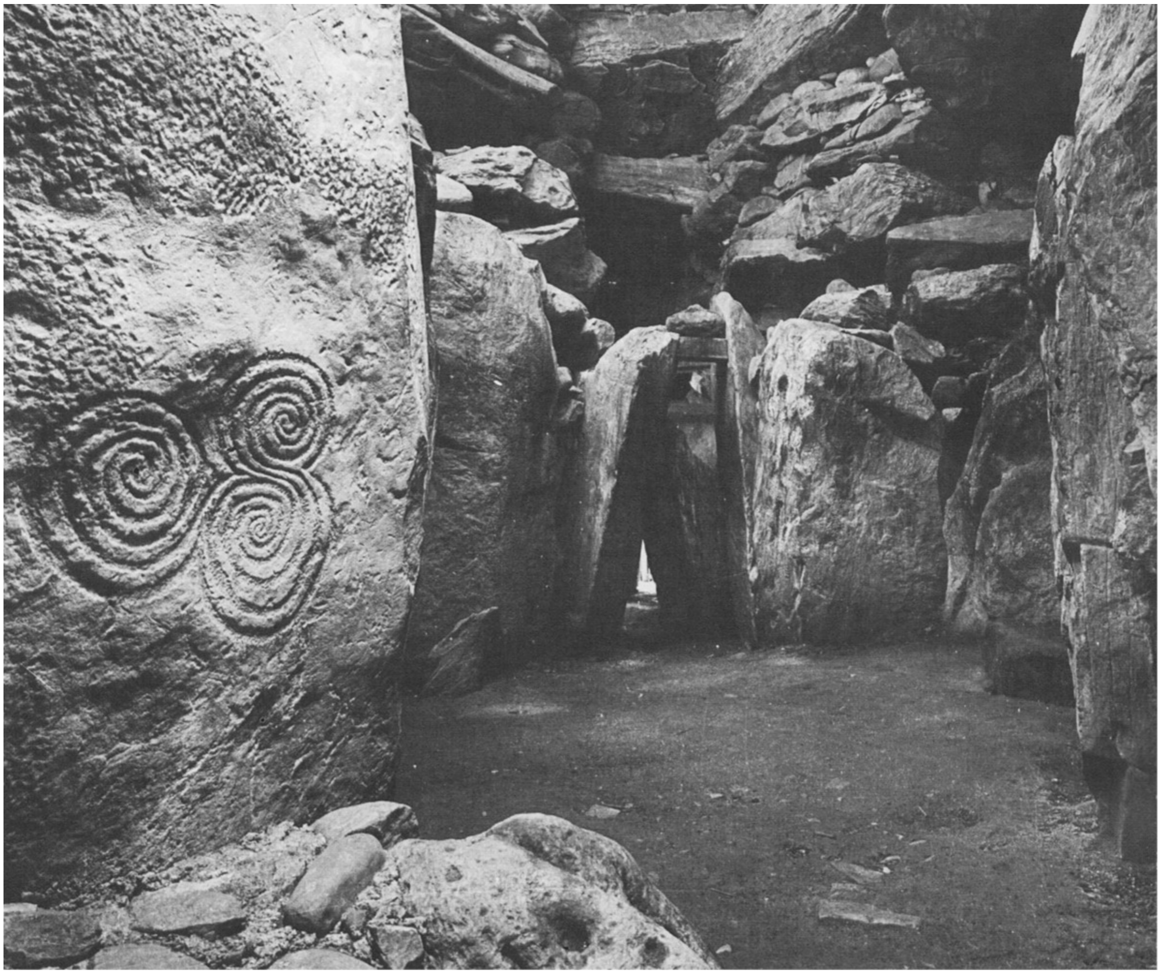
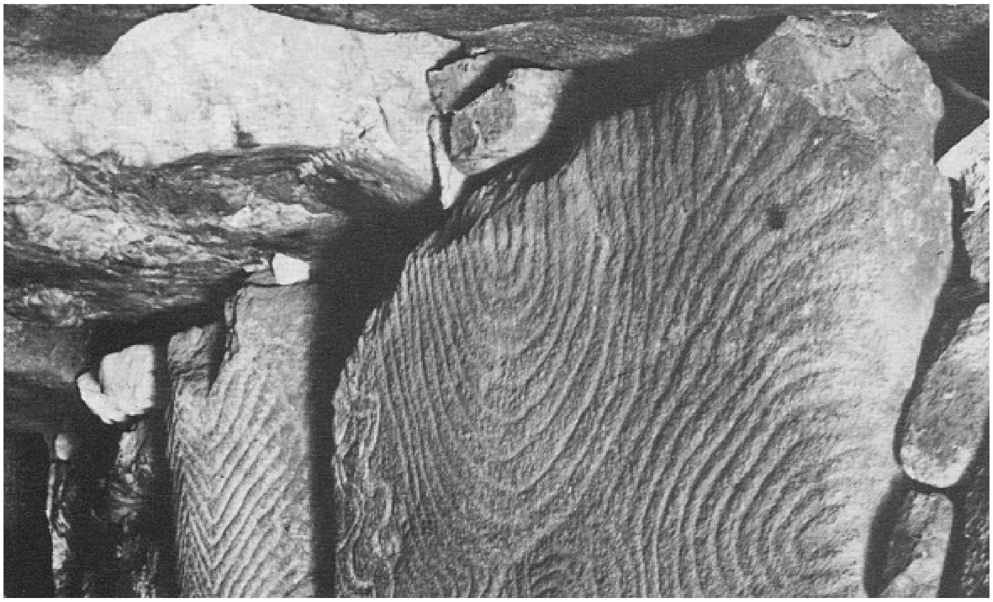


Fig. 12b: Interior of the New Grange tomb with rock engraving (Ireland)



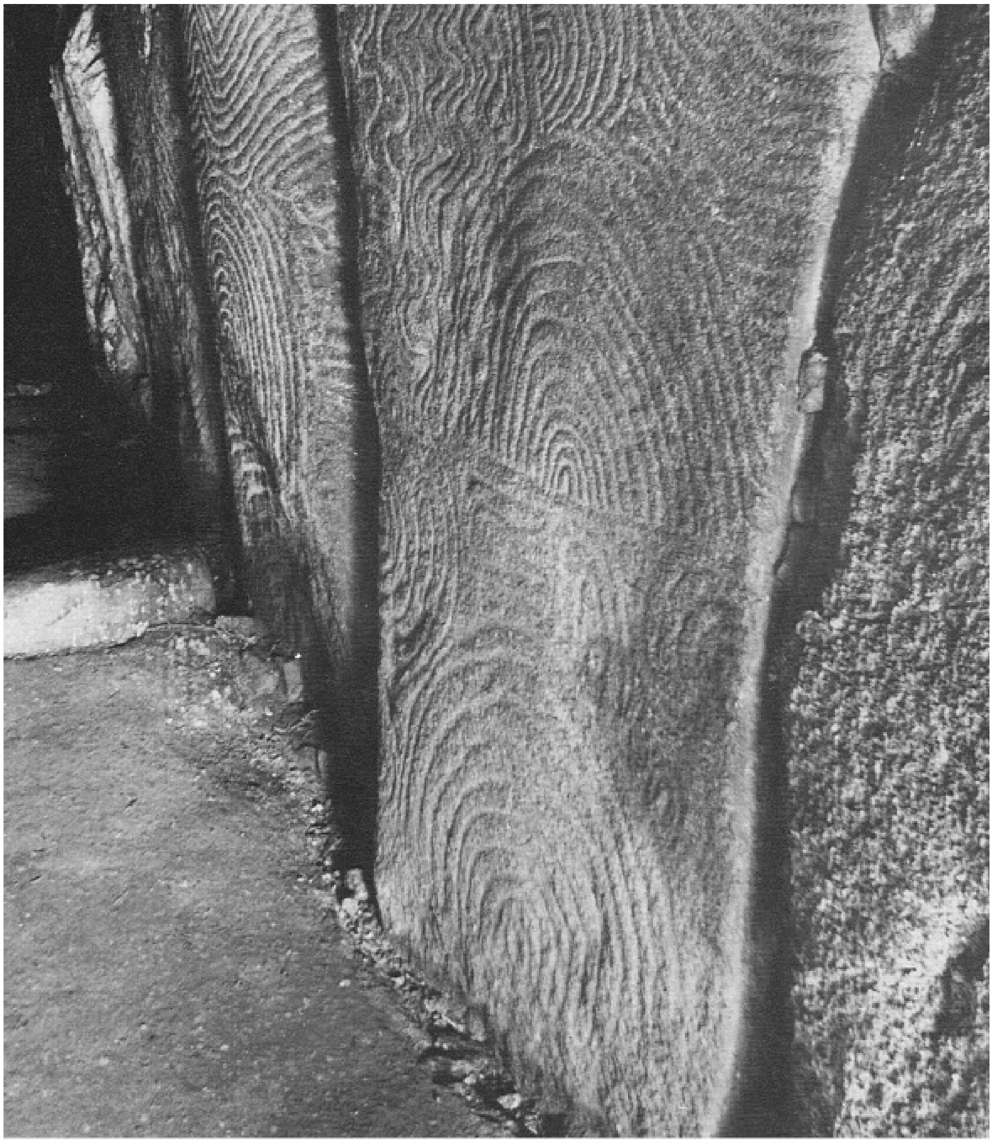


Fig. 13: Engravings on megalithic stones in the passage grave of Gavrinis (Brittany)

A further variant of megalithic tombs are the gallery graves (in French “Allées Couvertes”), which have a very elongated shape like a gallery and at the end of which is the actual burial chamber. They provided space for ceremonies involving numerous people, which emphasizes their function as a funerary temple. Although today they have lost the cairns that covered them through erosion, they are still very impressive. The Roche aux Fées (“Fairy Rock”) near Essé in Brittany is considered the biggest and most beautiful example of this kind, and you can walk upright in it. According to Breton folklore, the Roche aux Fées, as well as other Neolithic graves, were built by fairies who brought forward the huge ←190 | 191→stones in their aprons, in their hands or on their heads.[93] It is noteworthy that the inner walls of several of these gallery graves have pairs of breasts cut into the rock.[94]

Another megalithic phenomenon is menhirs (in Breton “long stone”), often associated with burial sites and sometimes of enormous dimensions (Fig. 14 a).[95] On the other hand, some of the longest menhirs, which are relatively slim and have been perfectly smoothed out, stand alone in elevated locations. They were therefore easily visible on coasts and in open land, serving as landmarks, as well ←191 | 192→as for astronomical observation (Fig. 14 b).[96] Menhirs, whether broad or slim, tall or short, are found throughout megalithic architecture. However, they not only stand out as singular needles of stone in the landscape, but also form orderly structures such as stone circles, stone rows and stone avenues, which consist exclusively of menhirs.

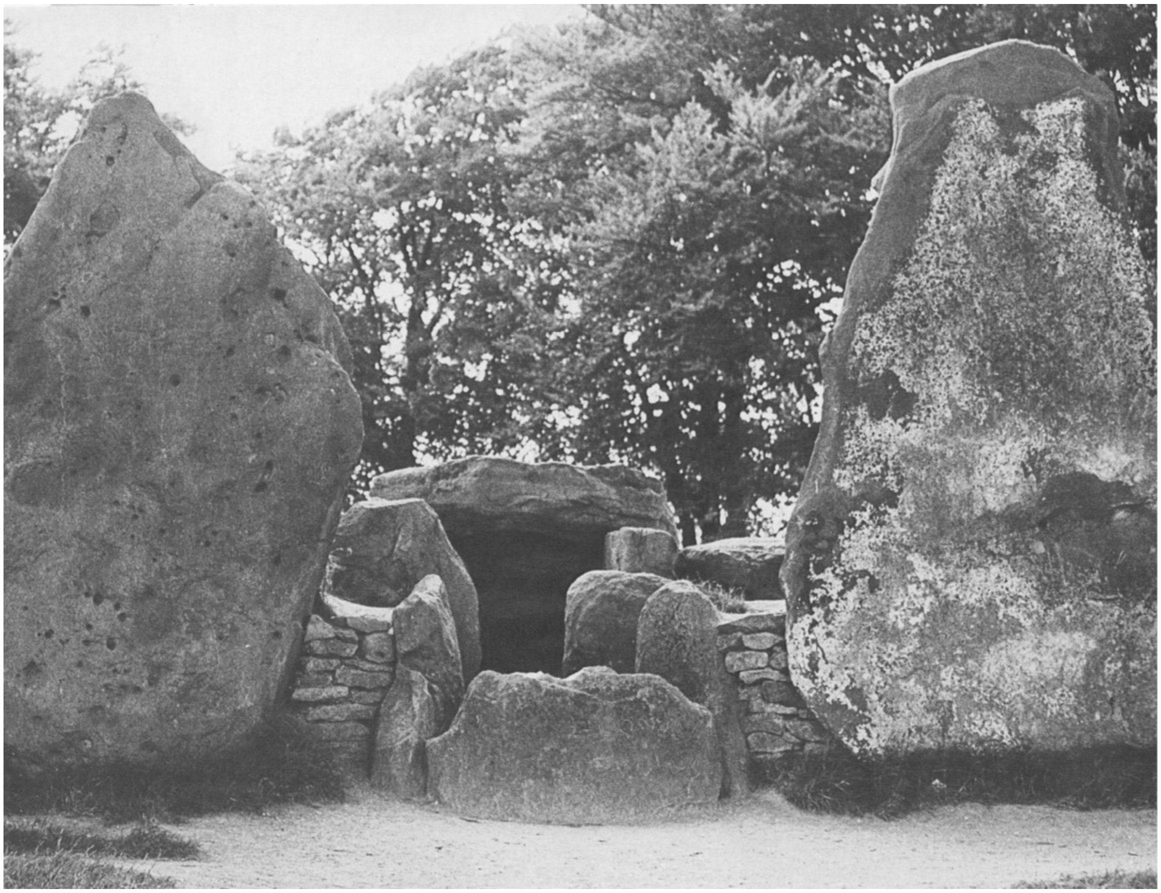


Fig. 14a: Menhirs in front of the long barrow tomb of “Wayland’s Smithy” (South England)

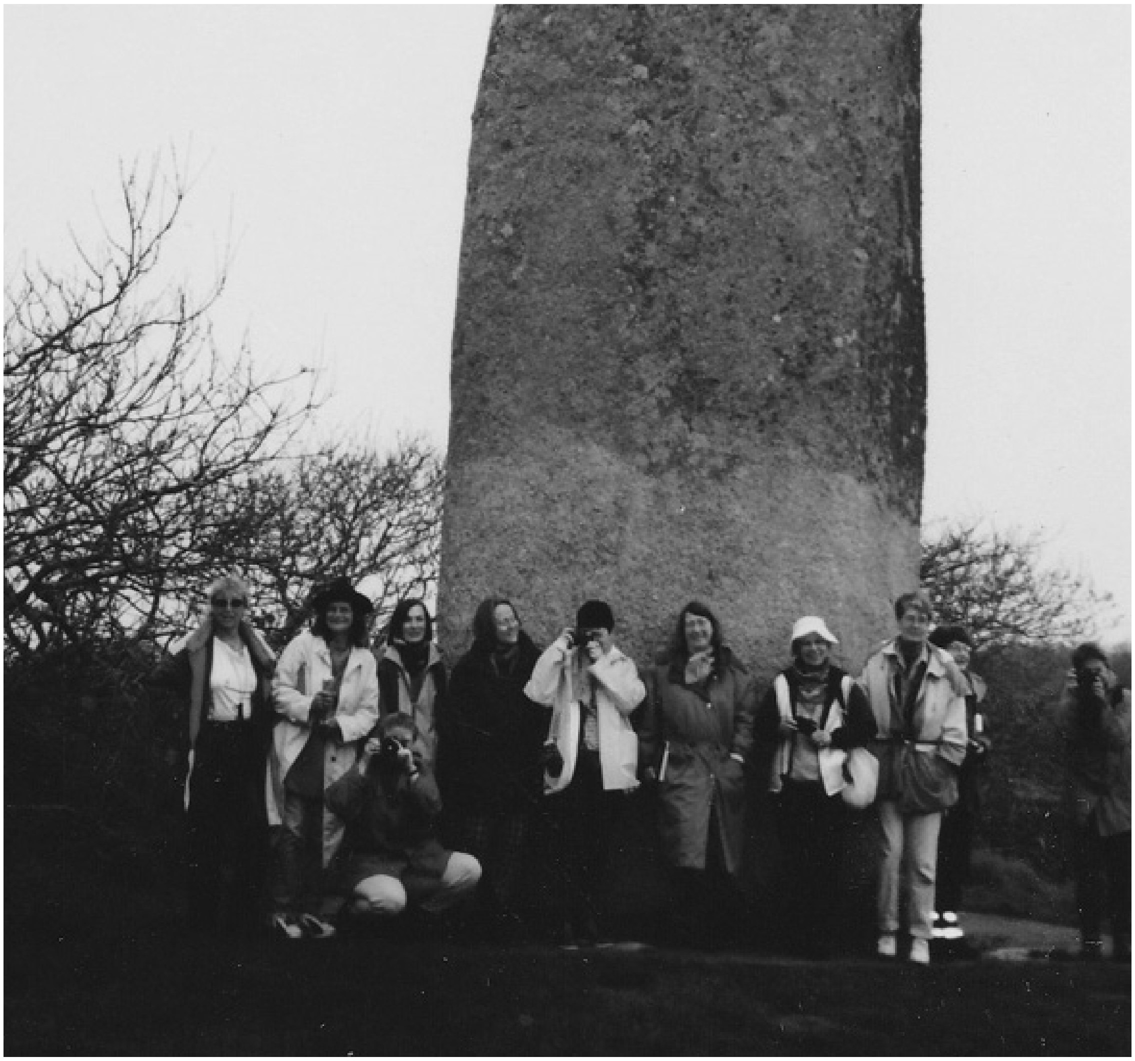


Fig. 14b: Women at the menhir of Kerloas, 10 m high (Brittany) (Photo by Karin Kastner)

Stone rows are menhirs, erected close to each other or at intervals in a row. Stone avenues (in French “Alignements”) consist of two rows of menhirs, which you can walk between; they are not too frequent. The pinnacle of stone avenues is the area around Carnac on the Bay of Quiberon (Brittany), with menhirs standing in rows from 4 to 6 km length, covering the terrain. They do not stand in ←192 | 193→just two but up to 10–13 parallel rows (Fig. 15 a, b). In addition, there is not just one such wide menhir avenue here of the dimension of a modern highway, but five of the same length over several kilometers, alternating one after the other to form a gigantic complex.[97] Here, as well as in other places, the stone avenues are connected with stone circles; in Carnac, each avenue originally ended in the west with a half or a whole circle. This suggests they were processional routes to the circles as places for religious ceremonies. These huge stone avenues were not built all at once, but over many generations.

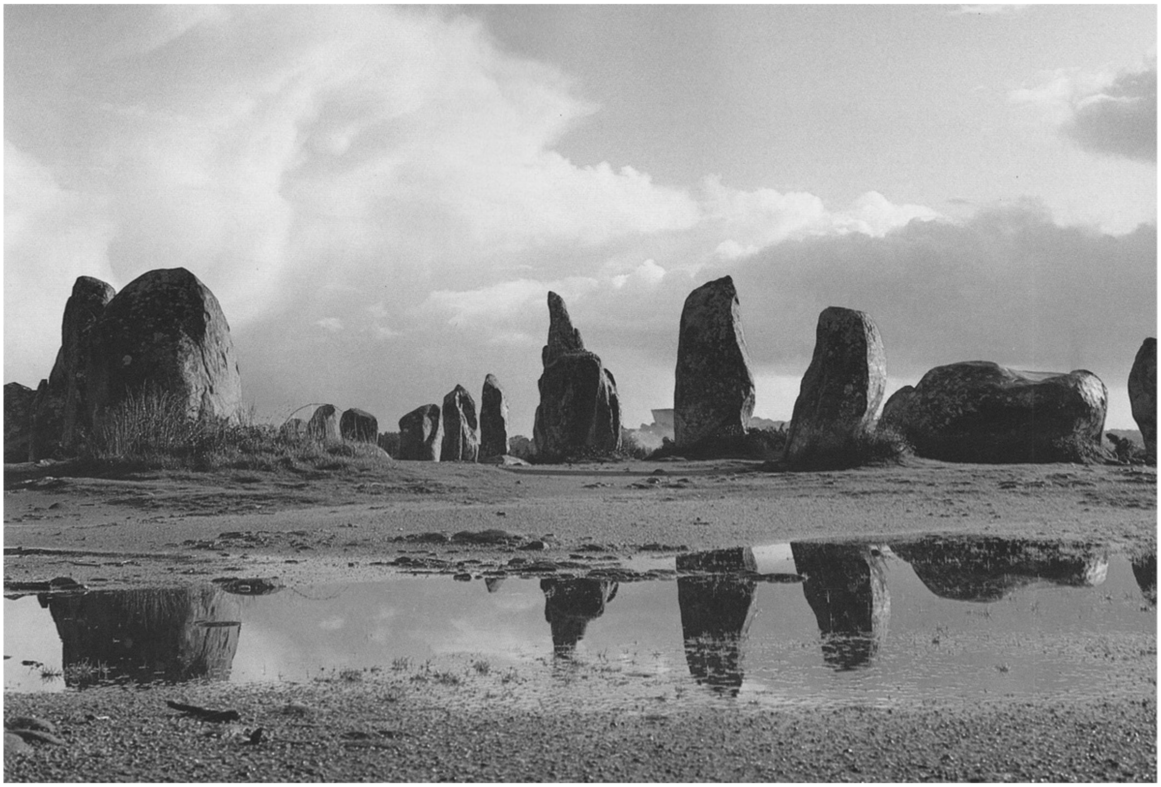


Fig. 15a: Parallel stone rows at Carnac (Brittany)

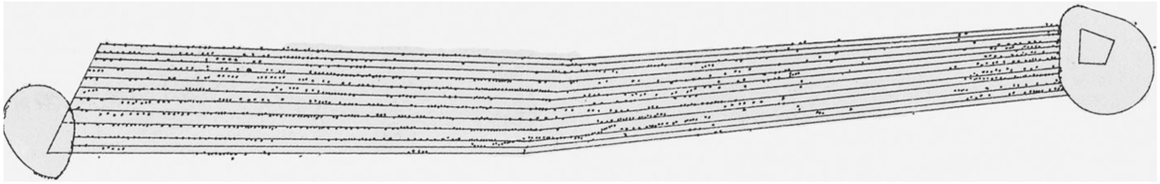


Fig. 15b: Plan view of the stone avenue "Le Menec" with stone circles, Carnac (Brittany) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

In contrast to stone avenues, stone circles are a widespread phenomenon; they were as important for people as the graves. The stones in these rings could be very high or knee-high, slim or exceedingly thick and wide. Inside, the stone circles provide an open space for gatherings and religious ceremonies. Religious dance has also played a major role, as evidenced by names such as “Rocking Stones” ←193 | 194→and “Stone Dance.”[98] At the same time, especially when there is a high stone in the middle, they served as astronomical instruments to determine, from the position of the sun and moon, the best dates for sowing and harvesting and also for the seasons’ festivals. They were therefore something like a Neolithic “church” in each village, but also the local “calendar.” They therefore had many different functions, so an either-or explanation does not do them justice.

←194 | 195→Most of the stone circles are simple rings, but there are also some very complex arrangements in which stone circles, rows of stones and stone avenues were combined. Continuing with the analogy of a “church,” each of those complex arrangements was like a Neolithic “cathedral” for a whole region. One example famous for its beauty is the stone circle of Callanish/Calanais in the Hebrides (Scotland) with its tall, slim menhirs (Fig. 16). From the north, a processional avenue of such stones leads to the circle, and short rows of stones go from the circle in the other three directions, creating a cross shape.[99] The stone circle rises on a promontory with an extensive view to achieve the best possible observations of the stars, especially the moon. The same is true for the very spacious Ring of Brodgar stone circle, which stands on a narrow stretch of land between two lakes in the Orkney Islands (Scotland). The Orkney Islands not only had a dense Neolithic settlement, but a particularly rich megalithic architecture. Oblong graves, subdivided by stone slabs (section graves), were found as well as round graves, each with a square, inner chamber whose walls were of uniform, faced ←195 | 196→stones, including the exquisitely built, elegant masterpiece Maes Howe. In the same perfect way, dwellings with stone cupboards, chests, beds and hearths were constructed such as in the village Skara Brae. In the Late Neolithic period, settlements with circular houses were built in Scotland, with fine looking “brochs” or round towers in the middle, usually located in exposed places by the sea. They resemble the “nuraghi,” the round towers of Sardinia, and had the same functions as meeting and religious places and later as defensive towers.[100]

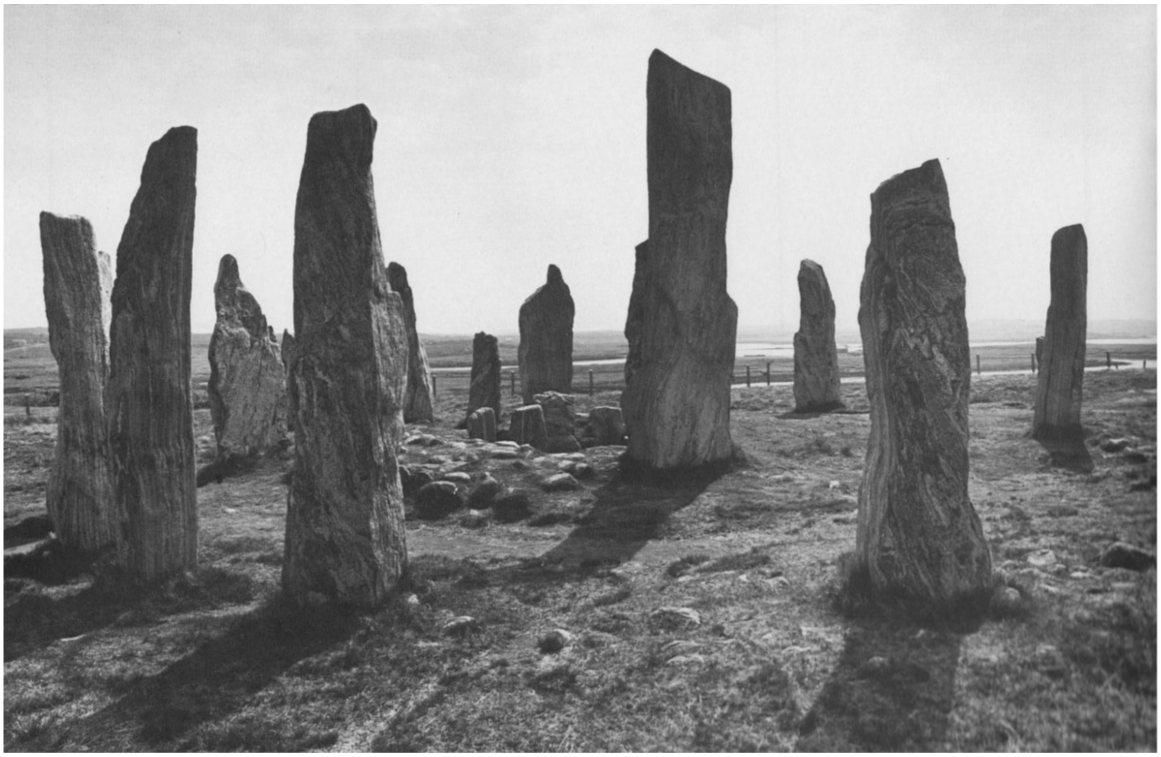


Fig. 16: Stone circle of Callanish in the Hebrides (Scotland)

←196 | 197→ ←197 | 198→However, the megalithic complex or “cathedral” of Avebury Henge (South England) exceeds everything else in size and complexity; it is considered to be the largest stone circle monument in the world (4th-2nd millennium). Here the Neolithic people created an artificial, round plateau of 450 m in diameter, surrounded by a once enormously deep ditch and a high ring wall, with access in each of the four directions. The plateau is so extensive that today’s village of Avebury fits well into it. The plateau is enclosed on its outer border by a large stone circle whose individual stones are huge in width and height (Fig. 17 a). Inside this outer circle, two more stone circles have been built, a southern ring and a northern ring, each of which has additional stone settings at the center (Fig. 17 b). But that’s not all: two stone avenues, each formed by a double row of menhirs and about 2 km long, turned off the plateau and meandered elegantly in the shape of snakes around the nearby hills towards the southeast and southwest. Today, the southwestern curved stone avenue has disappeared, and only single sections exist of the southeastern avenue. This stone avenue once led to another circular structure, the "Sanctuary," and it is assumed that the southwest avenue once ran in a similar structure.[101] Almost all the stones of the Avebury Henge were buried since the Medieval Ages and also partly destroyed, until several were excavated and re-erected in the last century, so that today the large, outer stone circle can be seen again on the Avebury Plateau, among other things.[102] The circular, symmetrical Silbury Hill is also noteworthy, which lies to the south of the Avebury Henge and exactly between the both curved stone avenues; the hill belongs to this megalithic site (see Fig. 17 b). It is the largest artificial hill in ←198 | 199→Europe: its interior consists of a seven-level round pyramid of drystone walls over a chamber grave. The spaciousness of the Avebury religious complex therefore encompasses the whole area.

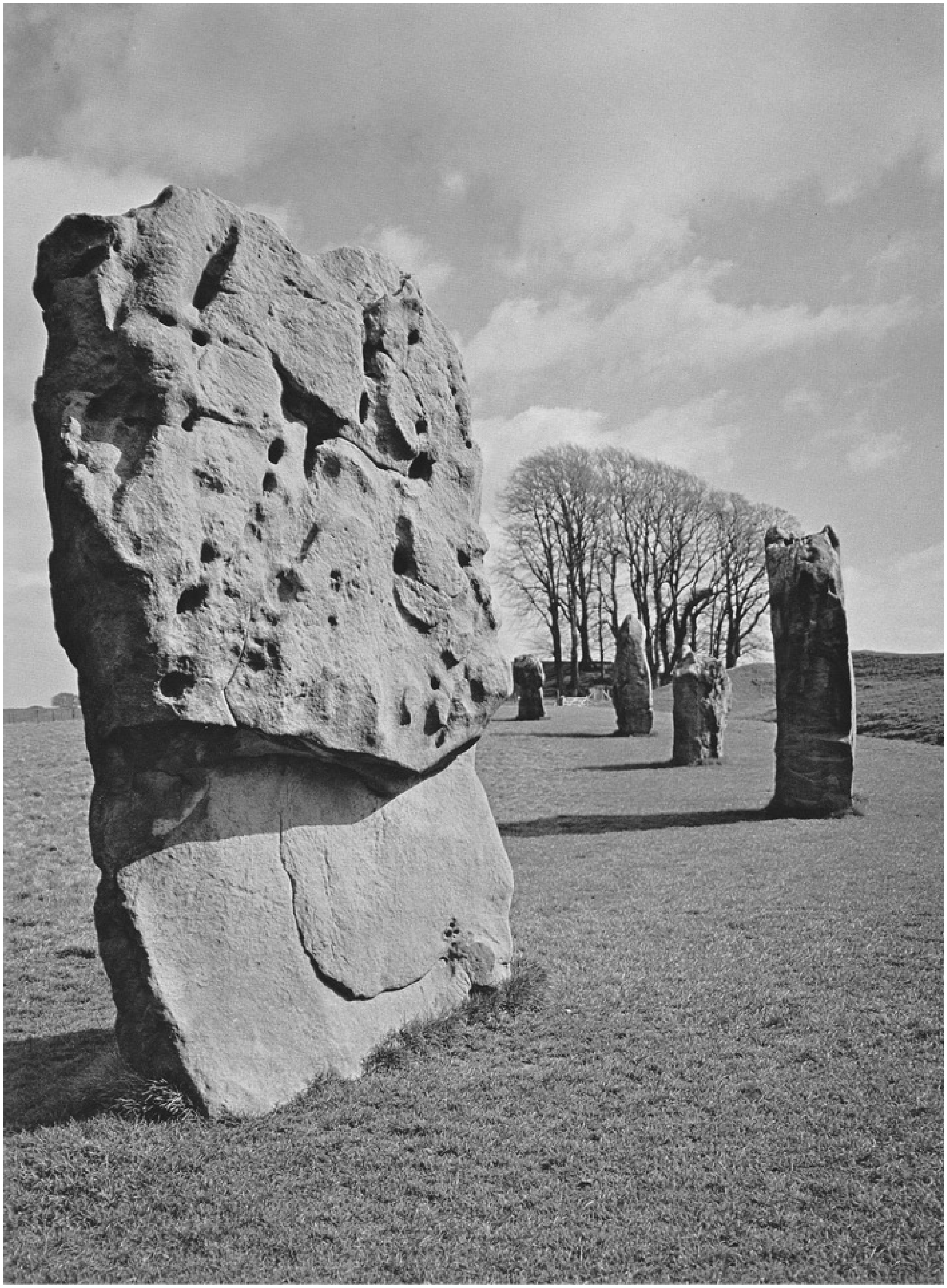


Fig. 17a: Part of the outer stone circle of Avebury Henge (South England) (Wikimedia Commons, author: JimChampion)

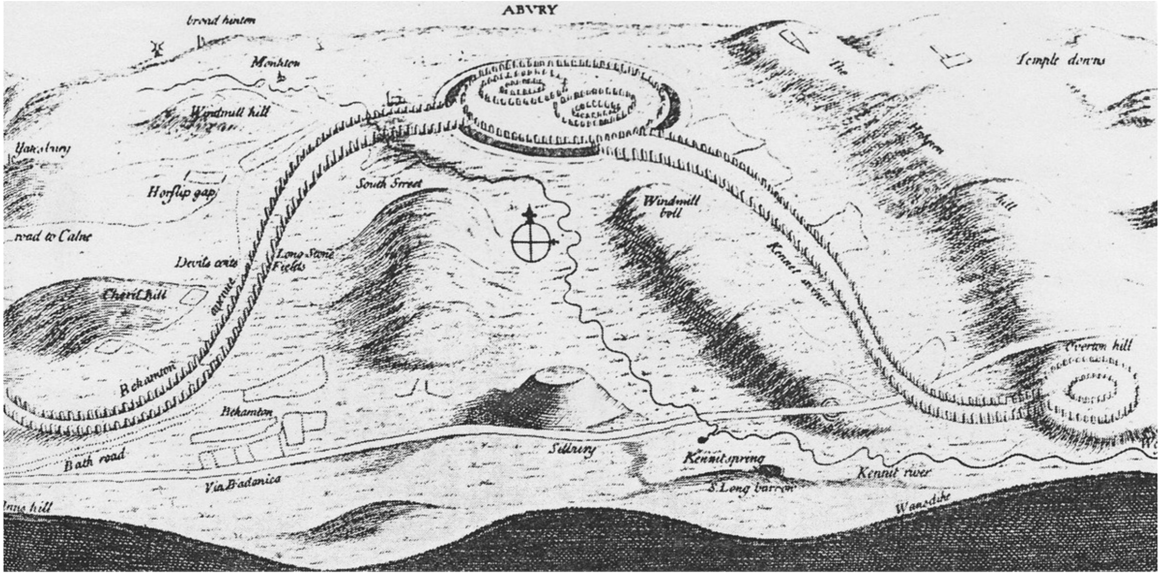

ABVRY
broad hinton
Monkton
Windmill hill
Temple downs
the
Hakpen
hill
Yatesbury
Horſlip gap
road to Calne
South Street
Windmill hill
Kennet avenue
Devils coits
Long Stone Fields
Cherill hill
avenue
Bekamton
Overton hill
Bekamton
Bath road
Silbury
Kennet spring
Via Badonica
S. Long barrow
Kennet river
Wansdike
hill

Fig. 17b: Reconstruction of the complete arrangement of Avebury Henge by William Stukeley (Wikimedia Commons, Houghton Library, Harvard University)

Although the masterpiece of the Avebury Henge is much older and more complex, the stone temple of Stonehenge on the Salisbury plain (South England) has become the most famous megalithic construction. The reason is simple, because this unique monument, detached in the landscape, has been visible throughout the millennia. With its huge carrier stones, joined together to form a circular gallery of trilithon gates and with the four even higher trilithon gates in the middle, it still towers openly into the sky, impressing countless people (Fig. 18 a, b). This stone temple was built from 3,100 to 1,100 in successive forms. Through all the different construction phases, the main axis of the plateau points to the northeast, where the sun rises at the summer solstice.[103] The inner trilithon gates were also used for precise observations of the sky, as the horizon around Stonehenge appears completely flat. This stone temple is the center of a circular, geometrically sophisticated plateau of 107-m diameter surrounded by two walls.

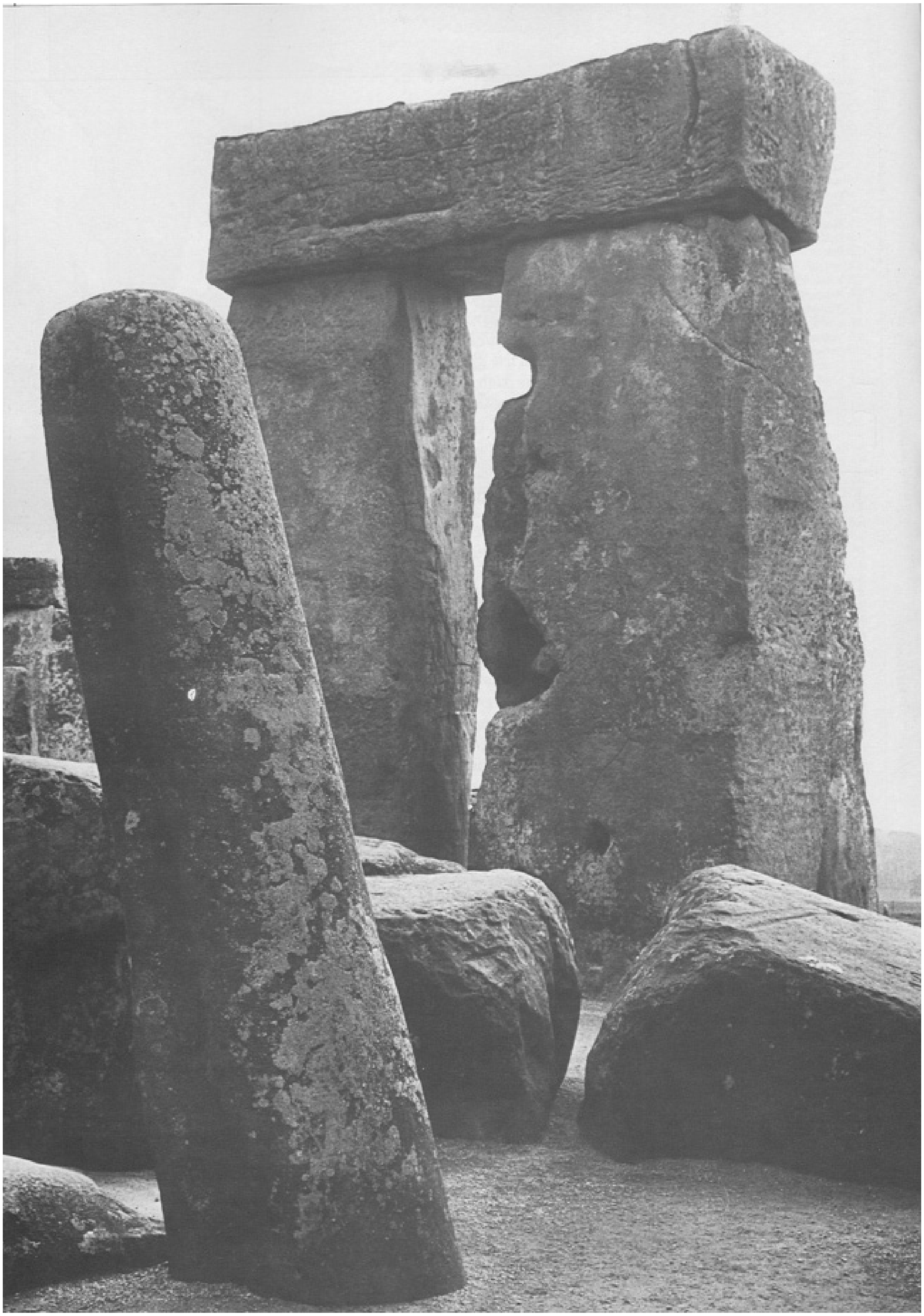


Fig. 18a: One of the trilithon gates in the interior of Stonehenge (South England)

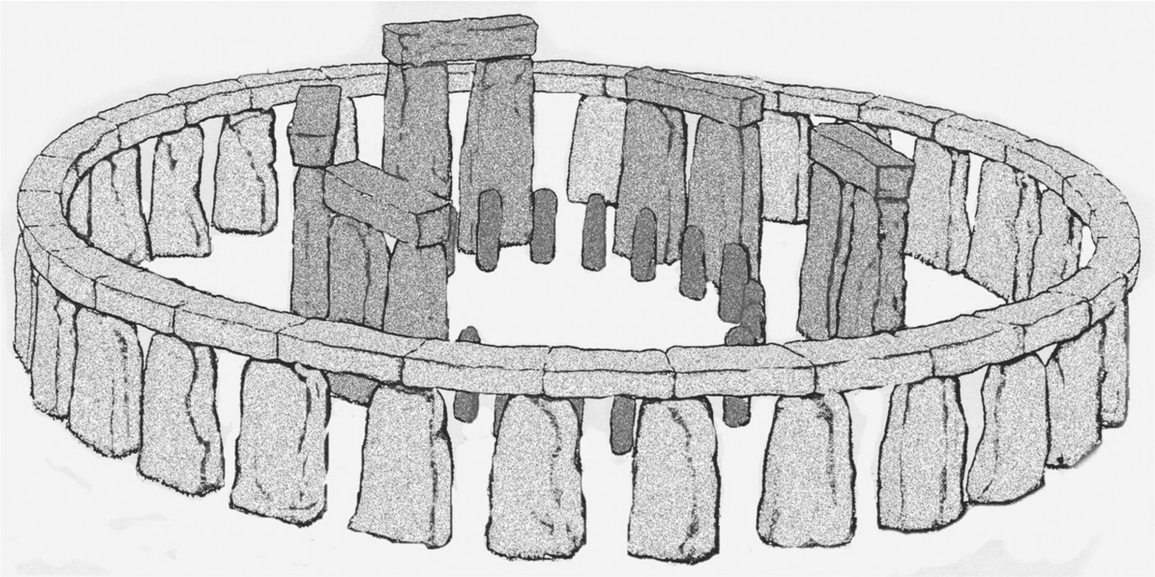


Fig. 18b: Reconstruction of the temple of Stonehenge (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Hence the name "henge," which means a round earthwork with walls, that is, a "circular earthwork enclosure." For the English henge monuments were inspired by the circular earthwork enclosures of the Central European LBK culture. One of the earliest sites of this type is Windmill Hill near Avebury Henge in South England. From the 5th to the 4th millennium the henge monuments spread rapidly. At least a thousand henges are still known in the British Isles today. Like the circular earthwork enclosures on the continent, most of them had wooden palisade structures inside—as the reconstructed "Woodhenge" shows (Salisbury plain). Only later these were replaced by elaborate stone architecture, like at Stonehenge.[104]

Most of the megalithic structures in Europe are located in exposed positions, either on hills with extensive views or beside the sea or lakes, providing an almost unlimited horizon, or in particular places inland, which make the horizon appear almost table-flat. This location is necessary, not to "mark" and "dominate the area" in terms of taking over land,[105] but to make astronomical observations from these ←199 | 200→monuments. The important data for the agricultural societies of that time could only be determined accurately with a level horizon. Moreover, communication could be carried out over long distances by using fire signs at night from these elevated locations. For this purpose, Neolithic structures and monuments were built in dead-straight lines on one hilltop to the next, providing wide horizons in succesion (lines of sight, called “ley-lines”). In that way telecommunication was possible over long distances or via a network of lines of sight spanning vast landscapes.[106]

North Europe: Longhouses for the Dead

The Neolithic economy and culture reached North Europe relatively late, and the Mesolithic way of life of hunters, fishermen and women as gatherers therefore lasted a long time. By 4,300 (late 5th millennium) there was an influx of people from the Lengyel culture of the middle Danube towards the north, where they came across the late SBK culture that influenced them in Central Germany and West Poland. From this, the Funnel-necked Beaker culture (in German: “Trichterbecher,” abbr. TRB) developed in the river basins of the Elbe, Oder and Vistula, which by 4,200 encountered the Mesolithic cultures in Northwest Germany, Denmark and South Sweden.[107] The two cultures were very different: the Mesolithic inhabited mainly the coasts as fishermen, while the TRB people settled on fertile loess soil inland. Only over time did they mix and acculturate, so the Neolithic way of life finally achieved a foothold in these northern countries and spread along the Baltic Sea to North Poland, and the Baltic to Belorussia (see area 9, Map 3).[108]

In the various regions, TRB culture evolved differently depending on the environmental conditions. In Poland, for example, large settlements with impressive houses have been found, while the villages in South Sweden were very small. Nevertheless, there were fundamental similarities, so that the TRB culture can be identified throughout its wide distribution area. The general economy was agriculture, using the plow, and animal husbandry, which was adopted from Central Europe. Even the pottery forms remained the same in all regions of this culture, as well as the construction of the characteristic long barrow tombs.[109]

←200 | 201→The TRB maintained a very old grave architecture with these long barrow tombs, which in West Europe only appeared in the early stages in form of tumulus graves. The long barrow tombs of the TRB consist of an elongated earth mound supported by wooden posts or border stones. The border stones are glacial erratics, abundant in northern Europe. Such graves have been found in Denmark and North Germany.[110] Especially many are known in western and southern Poland, where they also occur in groups and are impressive in size. They are usually 25–40 m long, almost half of them are 60–80 m long, the largest reaching 170 m in length. Their front is slightly wider than the end, giving the graves a trapezoidal appearance, and the front contains the entrance facing the rising sun. In some, the entrance is decorated with a meter-high triangular stone.[111]

With this shape, the tombs reproduce exactly the type of construction of the large longhouses of Late Lengyel culture in West Poland, which preceded the TRB culture. Therefore, they should be literally seen as longhouses for the dead, and this kind of similarity between house building and burial structures is a general principle in Neolithic cultures.[112] Just as the TRB people had dwellings divided into rooms, the long barrow tombs also had several sections of wood inside where the deceased were individually buried in wooden coffins. Wooden interior structures were also buried in the hills as ritual rooms for funeral ceremonies.[113]

Towards the end of the 4th millennium, the influence of Atlantic megalithic architecture is visible. At that time, the TRB people in northern zones adopted the megalithic culture from the west and built chamber tombs (dolmens) (from 3,500) and passage graves (from 3,200) from large erratics. Archaeologists have found these new grave structures in Holland, North Germany and South ←201 | 202→Scandinavia, which shows the close connection with West Europe.[114] Burial customs changed with the adoption of the megalithic culture; as in megalithic tombs the bones of ancestors were kept together and not individually, associated with skull burials and fire burials, which means depositing scorched bones after burning. The TRB people in Poland, however, remained unaffected by these new customs and continued to build the traditional long barrow tombs.[115]

Noteworthy in the entire area of the TRB culture are the circular earthwork enclosures, which were taken over from the LBK culture and continued to be built for a long time. Here as there, the functions remained the same: they served as gathering places, religious rooms, astronomical observation stations, and additionally as burial grounds. Among the bones of animals and pottery shards, human bones have been found in the enclosing ditches, indicating that people wished to be laid to rest in these sacred places.[116]

The prosperity of the cultures on the Baltic Sea, which made these extensive structures possible, is due not least to amber. On all coasts, but especially in the Baltic area, this was collected and processed in proper amber workshops.[117] It was then passed on, in many shapes, over long distances in Europe, bringing the cultures of northern Europe into contact with the other cultures of this epoch.

In general, it can be said that the secure subsistence economy, which was predominantly in the hands of women, enabled the extensive construction work carried out by men in all these cultures, providing men with a new field of activity beyond hunting.

Neolithic Social Order in Europe: Patrilocal Nuclear Families or Matriarchal Clans?

The Hunt for “elites and hierarchy,” “trade and property”

The same assertions have been made for the social order of Europe’s Neolithic cultures as we have already heard for this epoch in West Asia. In standard ←202 | 203→archaeological works, there are two groups of problematic statements which have not been confirmed but have nevertheless been repeated without hesitation: one refers to the topic of “property,” the other to the topic of “elites.” It is claimed that agriculture led to “property” in the form of ownership of land, crops and prestigious objects. So-called “elites” are said to have appropriated the goods of the majority, be it supplies or special arts and techniques, with which they planned and organized large-scale undertakings such as urban development and megalithic architecture. This necessarily led to competition, because they had to defend their “property,” from which endless conflicts allegedly arose and even “war.”

This notion of “property” comes from our present social order and has been proved to be entirely mistaken, based on the study of still existing matriarchal societies. In these societies there is no ownership of land. Neither is the land cultivated individually, but each clan uses a certain part of land, with only the right of use, not ownership. Also, rights of use cannot become firmly established because matriarchal societies are aware of the principle of rotation, reallocating the plots of land once again after the harvest, or applying the strategy of slash-and-burn agriculture, where every few years they move on anyway. The harvest belongs to the entire clan; surpluses are not hoarded, but distributed as public meals in the community at the numerous festivals. In any case, the harvest is not considered a “possession,” but a gift from Mother Earth, which is rewarded with a gift in return, as the many harvest customs show. This equal distribution applies to special goods too, for the ethical principle is not accumulation, but distribution, granting equal welfare to everybody.[118] Under such conditions, it is not possible for individuals to appropriate the community’s goods for their own designs, and no elites can arise.

But what do the archaeological facts say about the social order of the European Neolithic? Can such matriarchal patterns be found there? We should first look at the residential mounds (tells), which are widespread not only in West Asia, but also in Southeast Europe. Given their complexity and good organization, support is again on the rise for an "elite" who planned the settlements. The claim is that these residential hills "fit more closely the picture of a hierarchical society," and the Copper Stone Age is said to have brought about a "change" to such "settlements with citadels and a central manor house (megaron)" in the 5th millennium.[119] However, critical research, which we have already mentioned for ←203 | 204→the situation in West Asia, has refuted the fact that there were citadels and a central manor house (megaron). In the light of the case study of Dimini in Greece, it has been shown that the larger buildings served as community and religious houses. The walls of the so-called "citadel" were actually retaining walls for the hill and also divided the settlement into equal segments of groups of houses, reflecting the social order of the clans living here. The same can be said for the other residential hills in Southeast Europe.[120]

Likewise, it can hardly be maintained that specialists such as "weavers, coppersmiths and priests" should have had "priority functions" there that turned them into an "elite."[121] Apart from the fact that there appear to be no female weavers or priestesses in this worldview, there is no trace of such privileges because it has been shown that all special goods were in no way in the hands of the few, but distributed equally in all houses (Dimini case study). Therefore, it cannot be understood, how such societies should have brought about "ruling men with prestigious axes, scepters and clubs," when, in the same breath, it is stated that the "settlements on the residential hills seemed to be egalitarian with no social differentiation."[122] Here only self-contradictions can be asserted which make such statements extremely questionable. Instead, we can assume that people were able to organize themselves by means of their council gatherings in the community houses and did not need a ruling class.

As for the sometimes huge, extensive cities of the Late Neolithic cultures of Vinča in Southeast Europe and Cucuteni-Tripolje in Ukraine, how should we imagine the situation here? It is tempting to think of planning carried out by chiefs because of the cities' uniformly round or oval concentric structures (see Fig. 2 a, b from this chapter), which is also claimed. However, these large settlements have not been designed on the drawing board nor have they been created at one single time. They gradually developed, starting from an initial circle of houses, around which the other houses of new generations and many new migrants were built and which grew like the rings of a tree. Since all houses were identical and no prominent buildings of chiefs are recognizable, this would be the most plausible explanation.

←204 | 205→Another popular topic for “planning by elites” are the large religious buildings such as the circular earthwork enclosures of Central Europe as well as the temples of Malta and the extensive megalithic architecture of West Europe. Calculations have been made regarding how many men needed how many man hours to build the huge stones of the Avebury system or the mighty trilithon gates of Stonehenge or even the kilometer-long stone alleys of Carnac—much as the pharaohs had their pyramids built or today’s corporations employ armies of workers. However, this approach is mistaken. Such building systems were created over generations; they did not arise at one time, but over centuries. They are based on community work with a religious background and their final form came about through trial, error and learning. The aim was not to create great monuments that motivated people, but to follow religious traditions. Therefore, no elite is required to drive its fellow citizens to such extraordinary achievements. There is no evidence for such a hierarchical society, because neither with the villages nor with the cities, not even with high settlement density in certain areas, are there any signs of superstructures of the powerful.[123] This speaks for egalitarian societies, which ability to self-organize still tends to be considerably underestimated.

Another explanation offered for the emergence of “elites” refers to the communication networks. It is alleged that the oldest clans in central locations had “monopolized long-distance connections (that is trade) through their extensive kinship networks,” their wealth creating a certain hierarchy.[124] But self-contradictions arise even here, because elsewhere we read that “trade was not necessarily about economic aspects, but the exchange of gifts” in order to “consolidate social relations.”[125] The handing over of gifts, however, does not constitute any “trade,” neither regional nor long-distance, and there is also no “monopolization.” Monopolies can only be secured by some groups through warlike or legal force—and such conditions clearly date from today’s society.

The explanation for hierarchization by “trade” does not work, so now it must be explained by the Neolithic cemeteries. For this the question is asked: “Who was permitted to be buried in the cemeteries?”[126] From the LBK culture in Germany 50 cemeteries have been found so far, with approximately 2,000 graves; ←205 | 206→too few compared with the entire population. This has led to claims of funeral privilege.[127] However, it should be remembered that many Neolithic cemeteries have been destroyed by erosion; moreover, today’s urban developments and interference in the landscape have also contributed significantly to the destruction of such sites. Furthermore, there were many burials in the ditches of the circular earthwork enclosures and other earthworks, which are not “war victims” but normal deceased. It is also noteworthy that women and children were frequently buried in pits close to houses and not in the cemeteries, where more male burials were carried out.[128] We wonder whether such burials have been taken into consideration. Once again, this highlights the great importance of the woman, whose final resting place was near her home, and, moreover, the fact that the children belonged to the woman rather than the man. An early rebirth in the same house was desired for them. This reflects the same religious beliefs that existed in Çatal Höyük in Anatolia.

In Search of the “nuclear family” and “father line”

The basic social unit was the clan, not the nuclear family, which is a very recent structure. In southeastern European tells, larger houses were not inhabited by “chieftains” and the smaller ones by the “families of their retinue,”[129] but rather by larger or smaller clans. This is also the case for closely arranged groups of houses, in which the lines of the same clan lived, and these groups of houses were larger or smaller depending on the size of the clan. Likewise, the imposing longhouses of the Early Neolithic LBK culture in Central Europe represented clan houses and were typical of them. Again, their size was based on the size of the clan.

The assumption of archaeologists that such houses of 30–40 m in length should have been inhabited by only 5–7 people shows how much the late-bourgeois nuclear family of father-mother-children needs to be defended.[130] This alleged number is extremely low and has to do with the dogma of the "eternal" nuclear family—luckily it has been criticized.[131] In any case, compared with ←206 | 207→similarly sized houses in contemporary matriarchal societies, 20–40 residents must be assumed, that is a clan, all members provided for by a central hearth.

Also problematic are research statements on the social order in the Late Neolithic, for example, on the numerous pile-house villages. Here, rather than large longhouses, the small pile dwellings gave rise to the stereotype of a biological nuclear family, the claim being that this is the "elementary form of human social life." In these houses, the nuclear family managed an allegedly self-contained "household"—probably with the woman as the eternal housewife. The village is said to be a permanent, stable unit headed by a male "village chief." Also, if the houses were in precise rows, the villages are again said to be "planned" by an elite.[132]—This supposition was also strongly contested, stating that such a concept is incompatible with the short duration of the dwellings. Every house also formed a functional unit together with its neighboring houses, suggesting clan relations and not small families, nor planning from above. In addition, each village was relocated on average every ten years, so there is no trace of the alleged stability.[133]

Once again, the explanation given for this high degree of change is "conflict avoidance." However, this is hardly convincing because the high fluctuation rate would have meant permanent conflict. But there are no beaten skulls or massacres to support such a large amount of conflict, so the cause must be sought elsewhere. The often-fluctuating water level may have forced people to abandon and build new villages. A second reason is the slash-and-burn agriculture, already accepted for the Late Neolithic settlements in inland (Germany) and probably also applicable to the gardens and fields next the shore of the lake pile-settlements.

However, the repeated claim of a Neolithic nuclear family has a reason: it's about the father line! For in contrast to the maternal line which is always visible and secured by birth, the guarantee for the father line is quite uncertain. Only by taking precautions such as isolating every single woman in a household with the husband, and keeping her in custody or shutting her up inside for her entire life to prevent her from meeting any potential lovers, can a man recognize his biological children. These are highly problematic measures that could not be achieved without physical and mental violence and only emerge in early patriarchy. For the Neolithic Age, with its clans and the great importance and freedom of women, it is highly unlikely—so it is imagined without any evidence.

How much male wishful thinking plays a role in this can be seen in the attempts to prove patrilocality for Neolithic cultures, that is, residence based ←207 | 208→on the clan of the father. Such an attempt already exists for the Early Neolithic LBK culture in Central Europe, the evidence for this coming from an excavation at Vaihingen/Enz. A large settlement was found there with 450 longhouses, of which 45 were inhabited at the end. There were two lineages, and it was found that men and children from one lineage group had very similar isotopic data, while there were differences in the wives, their isotopic data being similar to those of the other lineage group.[134] From this it was concluded that, within the village, there were arranged marriages, and that the young women and men from two clan homes in the village married reciprocally, and that the women moved to the farmhouses of their husbands. This is allegedly "patrilocality," whereby the "father line" is tacitly assumed,[135] since without an established father line there is no patrilocality.

This interpretation is considerably exaggerated, because the result only states that, in this village, there was intermarriage between two clans.[136] Even if all the clans had organized themselves according to this kind of marriage system, it does not mean there was "patrilocality" but only "virilocality," that is, the wife living in the house of the husband. There is ethnological evidence for this kind of marriage from some matriarchal societies, as it is still a matriarchal pattern when a matrilineal woman moves into the man's house, but her children bear her clan name. Additionally, her economic independence is ensured by her own clan, that is, by the work of her brothers who care for their sister's children.[137] In other words, virilocality does not require a father line, nor can the father line be deduced from this. If intermarriage between two clans exists in such a matrilineal society, then the following pattern emerges: if a woman moves from clan house A to clan house B to live with her husband, and their daughter then moves back from clan house B to clan house A to live with her husband from the younger generation, the daughter returns to the house of her own clan. Her matrilineal mother does not live there, but her matrilineal grandmother.[138] Considering that, in matriarchal societies, the husband is not so important, whereas the grandmother is very important, we have discovered the true social background by shifting the perspective from male to female. Every woman moves into her grandmother's household according to the current matrilineality, and she is in good hands there.

Another example of an attempt to prove patrilocality—and as a prerequisite the father line—is the Talheim case with the people killed there. The remnants of the dead were genetically examined using several methods and discovered that the men and children from a lineage group had very similar data, while there were differences in the women, indicating they had married into the village. This was presented as the result. However, on closer, more critical examination, this analysis proved to be invalid, the methods containing serious errors, such as the omission of unwanted facts, reinterpretation of the sex of poorly preserved bodies to obtain "fathers" and "male ancestors," as well as faulty tables and graphs, and also the assumption that everyone in the village had been included in the statistics, which was inaccurate and rendered the statistics worthless. Last but not least, it was impossible to compare the methods used with each other.[139]—These procedures raise significant doubts on the scientific nature of the investigation, and suggest that the patrilocality theory was pre-supposed from the outset in order to support it, sacrificing scientific probity. As a result, the subsequent museum exhibition, which exclusively presents patriarchal extended families despite all the uncertain results, reveals how much this is all about paternity ideology. To top it all there is the absurd assertion that these one or two cases are proof of patriarchy for the LBK culture throughout Central Europe.

This heavily biased but important male issue continues in a similar vein. As already explained, every generation in the LBK culture built a new longhouse, leaving the ruins of their ancestor's houses next to it, in parallel rows. People thus could literally see their own lineage. But which lineage was it? Immediately it is said that the houses and farmsteads were "inherited in a male line from fathers to sons." And to prevent any doubt, it is also claimed that there would have been a "father principle," when a son placed the new house next to that of the alleged father, and a "grandfather principle," when the descendants alternately built first to the right and then to the left of the old house.[140]

Here tendentious speculations are turned into facts. This hereditary rule corresponds to the system used by patriarchal farmhouses, as they still exist today; however, it is completely unfounded for the Neolithic period. This can only happen if, firstly, the idea and institution of paternity were known; secondly, if the farmhouse was individual private property and could be inherited by a single person. But there is no proof at all for this, making the "patrilocality" and the "father line" ←209 | 210→theory dissolve as unproven. This is especially embarrassing when, based on this thin and wavering ground, the final, swaggering conclusion is that patrilocality and the paternal line existed throughout the whole Neolithic Age in all its periods. This is not just an example of back projection, but also of massive manipulation.

Evidence for the Mother Line

What evidence is there for the contrary, the assumption of the mother line as the way of organizing society in the European Neolithic Age?

First, the idea that the longhouses of the LBK culture, as clan houses, were always owned by all clan members and could not be passed down from one individual to another is clearer and more adequate, even if—as customary in matriarchal societies—a daughter inherited the position of matriarch from her mother. She was just the keeper, not the owner of the clan house. The same applied when a woman was the matriarch of a group of houses where her daughters' lines resided. In any case, the longhouses or groups of houses remained the property and home of all clan members; there was no such thing as individual inheritance.[141]

Regarding this issue of the mother line, yet another consideration comes from the art of pottery. Not only the larger houses in a village, used as places for religious worship, contained many decorated items of pottery, but collections of pottery have also been found in the normal houses. These were made there and had the same style. The uniformity of style was maintained over a very long period, which in the Early Neolithic LBK settlements ranged from a few hundred to a thousand years—an incredible continuity. Since it has been proven that women were the creators of pottery, a consistent style and its longevity point to a female lineage in which this art was passed down without any rupture from mother to daughter (matrilinearity). The reason is that the blood-related women stayed together in the clan house and were not separated by marriages, because only in this way was it possible to preserve these long-lasting pottery forms and artistic styles (matrilocality).[142] Moreover, pottery conveyed a certain symbolism, so that women also passed on the spiritual culture, thereby maintaining the lines of tradition.[143]

←210 | 211→Further evidence of the mother line has come to light from Late Neolithic pile-dwelling villages. These villages had houses of worship with murals, and such a painting has recently been reconstructed in detail by archaeological work. In the shallow waters of Lake Constance near Ludwigshafen and Sipplingen in Southwest Germany, numerous painted fragments from individual house walls of the Pfyner culture were preserved. Meticulously reassembled, for Ludwigshafen they produced a mural 7–9 m in length, once on the inner wall of a house—an archaeological sensation! Seven abstractly drawn figures, edged in white, can be seen there. A crossed band adorns every figure, a dot pattern covers them, and the sculpted life-size breasts that have been inserted characterize them as women (Fig. 19 a).[144] The crossed band over the upper body is, as can be seen here, a female attribute. The white dot pattern may mean milk or grains as gifts of food given by the women to the community. It also expresses particular holiness, as shown by the dot patterns in Malta’s temples (see Fig. 8). The mural painting therefore depicts seven holy women, all equal in size and, except for minimal details, in their outfit. Their heads, represented by a round disc, are surrounded by a short halo, which further emphasizes their holiness.[145] Their arms, which are also bright, are raised as if for a blessing.[146] It honors the archaeologist, who rightly identifies them as female ancestors, as primordial mothers who stood at the origins of the clans and have now been deified.[147] Therefore, this religious house was clearly built for the worship of ancestral mothers rather than male ancestors, which supports the concept of the mother line. The seven clans dedicated it to their primordial mothers and probably used it successively for their special festivals.

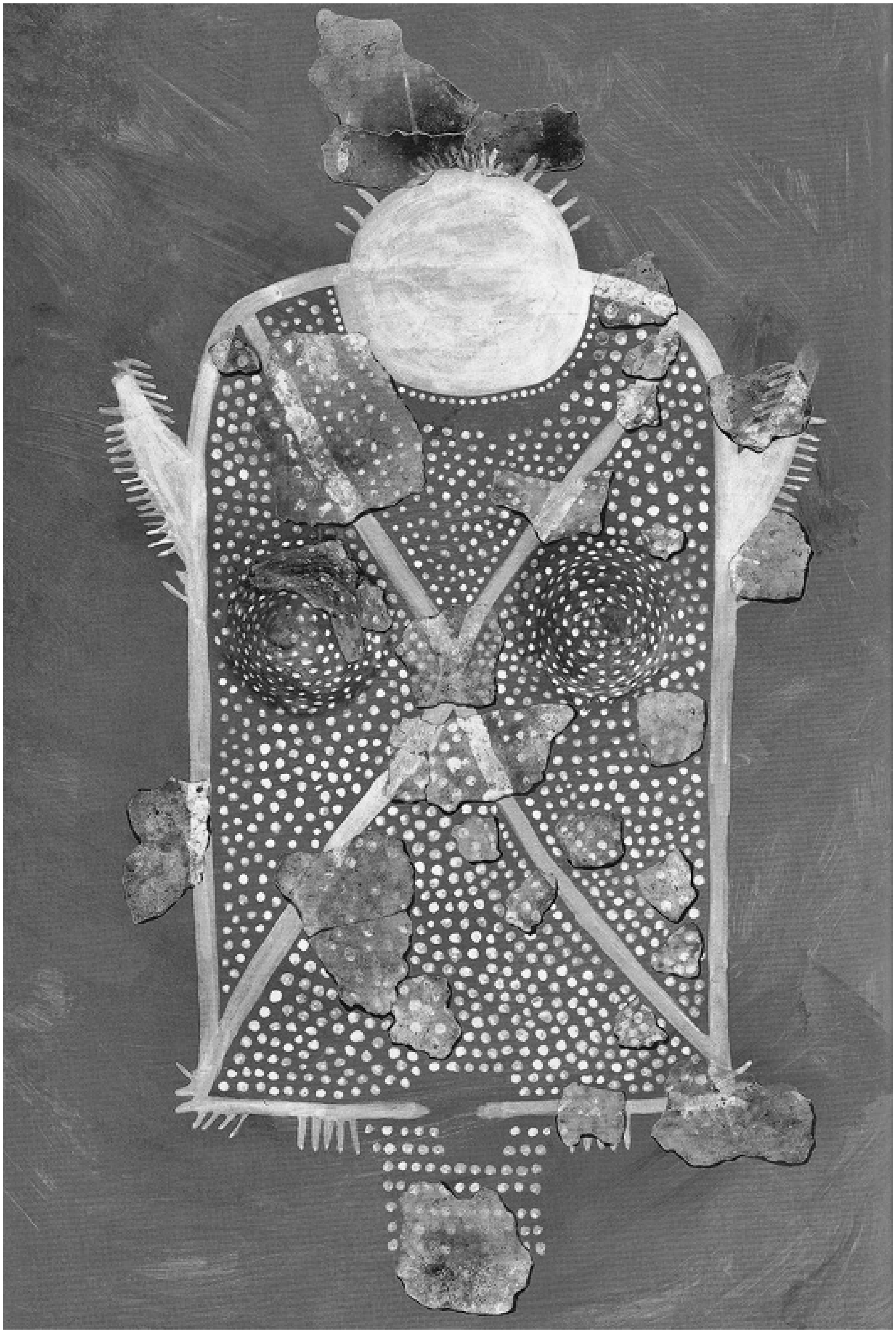


Fig. 19a: Female figure from a Neolithic mural, Pfyner culture, Lake Constance (Germany)

This interpretation of the figures as ancestral mothers of seven matrilineal clans is supported by the small drawings between the figures: little triangles can be seen below with attached angles like an “M,” and directly above the triangles, ←211 | 212→such M or W shapes stagger vertically one above the other (Fig. 19 b). These abstract signs indicate limbs, representing wide-open legs, that is, women in the birth position—a motif that is already known from Çatal Höyük.[148] Set above ←212 | 213→one another they symbolize a descending series of ancestresses in the sense of the female birth line, which the discovering archaeologist interpreted as “born of … born of …” etc.[149] The signs are, according to him, a clear representation of the mother line, a “tree of life” that arises from matrilinearity. Finally, they end in the little triangles, which are the living people from the lines, although hardly “dancing figures.”[150] These triangles are more likely to be houses with the M symbol on the gable, as found directly on rock carvings and in the pile-dwellings (see Fig. 6).[151] This means that the current clan house emerges from the line of the ancestral mothers, the living people being the last born along this mother line. Therefore, the mother house with the M on top is also a clear sign of matrilocality. Above all, there are the primordial mothers with their abilities to nourish and to bless. As deified ancestresses, they are also mother goddesses, and their number, seven, shows that each clan worshiped its own.

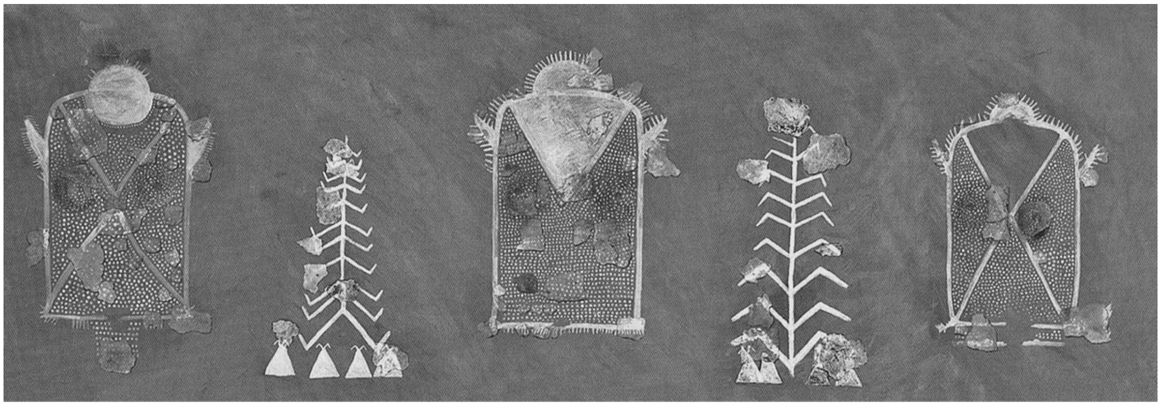


Fig. 19b: Part of mural with female figures; abstract forms can be seen between them, Pfyner culture

There is nothing comparably male in these houses of worship, apart from a horn of an aurochs found in the rubble and the cervical vertebra of a bison, animals apparently sacrificed to the ancestral mothers by men.[152] The horn does not stand as a symbol for “male power and potency,” but has to do with the ancient association of woman and moon as bull horn/moon horn, as can be seen in the Palaeolithic and later in Çatal Höyük.

The motif of the sculpted breasts is not only found on this “Mothers’ Wall” from Lake Constance, but several times in the whole area.[153] Moreover, it also appears on vessels found in the religious rooms, that means, analogous to the mother goddesses, they were also created as givers of sustenance. These woman-shaped vessels are widely spread, as well as carvings on pottery showing friezes of mothers, and the abstract motif of the ancestral line of mothers as the “tree of life,” also houses with M on the gable. These signs on pottery were used from the eastern Danube region (Lake Balaton, Hungary) to West Europe. The length of time this symbolism was used is also extraordinary: it extends from the 6th to the 1st millennium, thus including the eras of the Early and Late Neolithic, the Bronze Age and part of the Iron Age.[154] In other words, this symbolism was ←213 | 214→highly significant, because the maternal genealogy and the social order based on it also lasted a long time.

Therefore, we cannot support the opinion of researchers that, in the Early Neolithic, there were generally patriarchal patterns with the “unity of man, house and farmstead” and that now, in the Late Neolithic, suddenly—under mysterious circumstances—the mother line and matrilocality emerged. In particular, the age of the symbols referring to matrilinearity refute any sudden and late emergence of this. Not a single case is known at present or in history where matriarchal patterns emerged from patriarchal ones—so this mystery simply does not exist. It arises only through the assumption of the ideology of “patrilocality” for the Early Neolithic Age–a false premise, as we have seen.

Egalitarian Burial Culture

The Neolithic tombs speak a language similar to the dwellings, even though the ruling doctrine also sees “Big Men” as potentates here. These tombs and grave complexes are often found in elevated locations, but not as “marks for land seizure and territorial claims of elites” to claim the land of their male ancestors by their monumentality.[155] The fact is, when we search for these distinguished male ancestors, the evidence becomes very thin. Like in Çatal Höyük (West Asia), people in Southeast Europe were also buried under the floors of houses on the dwelling hills in the 7th millennium. A recent study from the Balkans shows that half of these burials are children of different ages, the other half primarily women and only a few men.[156] Thus women and children had a special part, while men were buried outside the houses in the yards and, around 5,000, in regular burial grounds.[157] This clearly indicates matrilinearity, according to which women and children belong together and the aim was for deceased children to be reborn as soon as possible by the women from the same clan. The symbolism of the house also supports this idea: the house was considered feminine and like a womb, because the community lived, was nourished, and died there, and was there born again. The same applies to burials under the sacred hearth or in ovens, which ←214 | 215→had themselves the shape as a uterus. Uterus-shaped vessels where infants were buried were also found, and from later Neolithic times urns with female features, breasts, and vulvae are known.[158]

Even in Central European cultures the distinguished male ancestors are missing, for here there are pits, often lined up in a long ditch, with women and men buried without any indications of hierarchy since they were members of the same clan.[159] The same applies to western and southern European group burials in megalithic tombs, which were generally clan mortuary houses, just for one clan, or chamber graves and section graves for several clans. Megalithic tombs were used for a very long time, so for new burials the skeletons were simply pushed aside and the deceased or their bones added.[160] The megalithic graves could therefore hold many deceased, for example, in France and Spain they contained several hundred skeletons, and in the hypogeum of Malta as many as 7,000 dead people were buried.[161] These funerals express the communal and egalitarian characteristics of the societies.

The particularly large tombs such as New Grange, Knowth and Dowth (Ireland) and Silbury Hill (South England) as well as the imposing long barrow graves (North Germany, Poland) required extensive cooperation of clans and tribes in a region. But there is no evidence that these—including the huge circular earthwork enclosures and mighty henge monuments—were built by "planning" elites of high priests and potentates, or that they were used as places of worship and tombs exclusively for the latter.[162] Their construction and maintenance presented a challenge to many people, which they overcame by working together. The monuments were therefore commonly owned by the people of a whole region, being their temples, where they met for consultations and religious festivals. These later earthworks and megalithic structures had the same ←215 | 216→ functions as the earlier temples of Göbekli Tepe in West Asia and the age-old painted cave sanctuaries of the Palaeolithic.

As far as grave goods are concerned, hierarchy can neither be seen in this epoch. At first, only about one-third of the graves ever contained such offerings, and when they did, these were rather modest in comparison with the furnishings of the homes. If they were located at the entrance of the tomb, they were not intended for single deceased persons, but for the whole group.[163] Even in the case of personal gifts, it is often difficult to determine status differences, especially with regard to gender relations. They may be opulent simply because the deceased was much loved, which applies especially for baby and child graves. It is not even certain if a tomb was "rich" or "poor" because objects made of perishable materials, such as skillfully-made wooden objects or elaborate clothes, have not survived.[164] Moreover, funerary objects in that period did not reflect any individual possessions or personal power, but rather were fundamentally symbolic in nature as signs of religious ideas or of particular qualities of the deceased.[165] In general, the grave goods for men and women refer to their crafts: in women’s graves there were grindstones, spinning whorls, jewelry, a large amount of decorated pottery and tools for their production, religious objects in special graves for priestesses; while in men’s graves there were axes and blades of flint, obsidian, silex and deer antler, arrowheads for hunting and goods from their activity in the gifting networks. Usually women and men were equally distributed in the graves. In other words, both sexes had different but equivalent areas of action, they cooperated in a complementary way. In a large LBK culture burial ground, it was found that the few jewelry items placed in men’s graves decreased with age, while they increased with women, indicating their growing reputation as clan mothers.[166]

Nevertheless, especially from the oldest, huge megalithic tombs, the result of research is that only a few people were buried in them, for example, about 10 persons in the tombs of the 4th millennium in France, only a few burials in the oldest tombs in Spain, six in the mighty English long barrow graves, and in the largest monument in the Orkney Islands only three burials.[167] Now, without hesitation, “large tombs” were immediately equated with “Big Men,” assuming they had found what they were looking for: a male-dominated, hierarchical society.

←216 | 217→The fact that, in one of the oldest Neolithic tombs in Europe, there was an old woman surrounded by the largest number of vessels and tools found there, made of bone and obsidian (Greece, 7th millennium), does not fit the male-dominated idea at all.[168] This discovery does not reflect her “wealth” or even her “power,” but the high esteem she enjoyed. Similar burial finds came to light in Central Europe: a woman more than 60 years old with a beautiful hood of snail pearls (LBK culture, Germany, 6th millennium),[169] and several older women from 50 to 70 with richly decorated vessels and numerous symbolic objects (Lengyel culture, Poland, 5th millennium).[170] They had the highest social respect, while there was no evidence of a male “elite,” as insignia of domination did not appear anywhere. Huge long barrow tombs are also known from the Funnel-Necked Beaker culture (TRB, Poland, 4th millennium BC), and one of them, 30 m long, contained the grave of a single woman aged 70.

She had been buried in a wooden coffin, and above the tomb a large wooden structure had been erected as a sacred building for religious celebrations—revealing the high veneration which was extended to this woman even after her death.[171]

It is not difficult to understand these distinguished women's graves. As on the "Mothers' Wall" of Lake Constance, we must consider the deceased buried in them to be prominent ancestral mothers. They were the primordial mothers and founders of great matrilineal clans or even tribes whose wise counselors and leaders they had been in life. After their death, they became deified personages of importance for the following generations who sought their protection, and their tombs became sanctuaries for their descendants in this region. No hierarchization of society was connected with this religious worship because, politically, this social form was based on consensus, preserving its egalitarian character. There were no symbols of power in the graves of these women.

There are also special graves of young women richly decorated with jewelry and symbolic objects, for example, a mother with her little daughter from the Lengyel culture in Poland; also a teenager whose grave contained a model of a temple.[172] From the same culture in Hungary, a young woman with a copper armring and religious objects was found, and strikingly beautifully decorated graves of girls and female infants, while the graves of boys remained simple.[173] Also from Romania rich graves of female adolescents occurred, the richest being of a sixteen-year-old teenager who was adorned with ten bracelets and covered with shell pearls (Boian culture), and the centrally located graves of two nine- to ten-year-old girls, equipped with shell pearls, ornate vases and figurines (Cucuteni culture).[174] This emphasis on female offspring can only be understood if the society was organized along the mother line. The loss of female children and adolescents is particularly painful for such cultures, because they are the hope of the matrilineal clan for its continuation in the future.

Special graves of men were also found, in which more of these objects occurred than usual, but no insignia of power.[175] This indicates a good reputation they had in their area of action and were honored for that. Even prestigious objects such as polished ceremonial axes or copper hatchets do not indicate chiefs and elites, for prestige is not the same as power. In contemporary matriarchal societies, it can be seen that, as a brother of the matriarch, a man can hold an important position for the clan and the community. As the eldest mother's brother, he can be elected spokesman for the clan or the entire community, representing it to the outside world, thus contributing significantly to local or regional consensus politics. For these tasks he receives symbols of his special reputation. In this respect, older and experienced men also play an important role in these societies, which brings them honor and prestige.[176]

As a result, the few burials in large tombs of very ancient origin simply testify that the deceased were especially respected or beloved persons in egalitarian societies, important female and male ancestors who were honored but had no power over others—because, in matriarchal societies, respect for their achievements does not result in hierarchy and domination. Only in later epochs were some megalithic tombs reused to bury individual patriarchal chiefs, shown by their insignia of power, but this was a misuse and went against the religion.[177]

←218 | 219→

Neolithic Culture and Religion in Europe: Primordial Mothers and Goddesses

The Symbolism of Tombs, Temples and Megaliths

Despite the great variety of grave forms in the different European cultural areas, a basic homogeneous idea can be recognized. The oldest tombs carved in rock in Malta have an egg shape, which is continued threefold in "cloverleaf form" in the older, small temples and returns numerously and in a large size in the hypogeum of Hal Saflieni. The oldest rock tombs in Sardinia are also egg-shaped, as are the tombs of the LBK culture in Slovakia.[178] Their meaning is obvious: the egg is the germ cell of new life. The egg shape undergoes a modification when the burial chamber is provided with a passage, as in the burial mound of Barnenez (France) (see Fig. 11 b). In this case the egg shape is elongated and oval to pear-shaped, as in most megalithic graves. It symbolizes the female womb, the uterus, with the entry and exit through the vulva. The dead were buried deliberately in a special position, which is mistakenly called a “squatted burial.” This obscuring usage of language distracts from the fact that the dead were buried in a fetal position in the womb of the earth in the hope that they would soon be reborn from there.[179] Mother Earth was now pregnant with them, as shown by sometimes huge burial mounds that represent her pregnant belly. The pregnant belly also appears as a symbol several times in the passage graves of Brittany: it is depicted as strongly arched upwards with protruding navel, sometimes even with a halo (Fig. 20 a).[180] The entire ensemble contains no symbolism of death but of rebirth, and the abundant use of red ochre as the color of life is another indication of this.

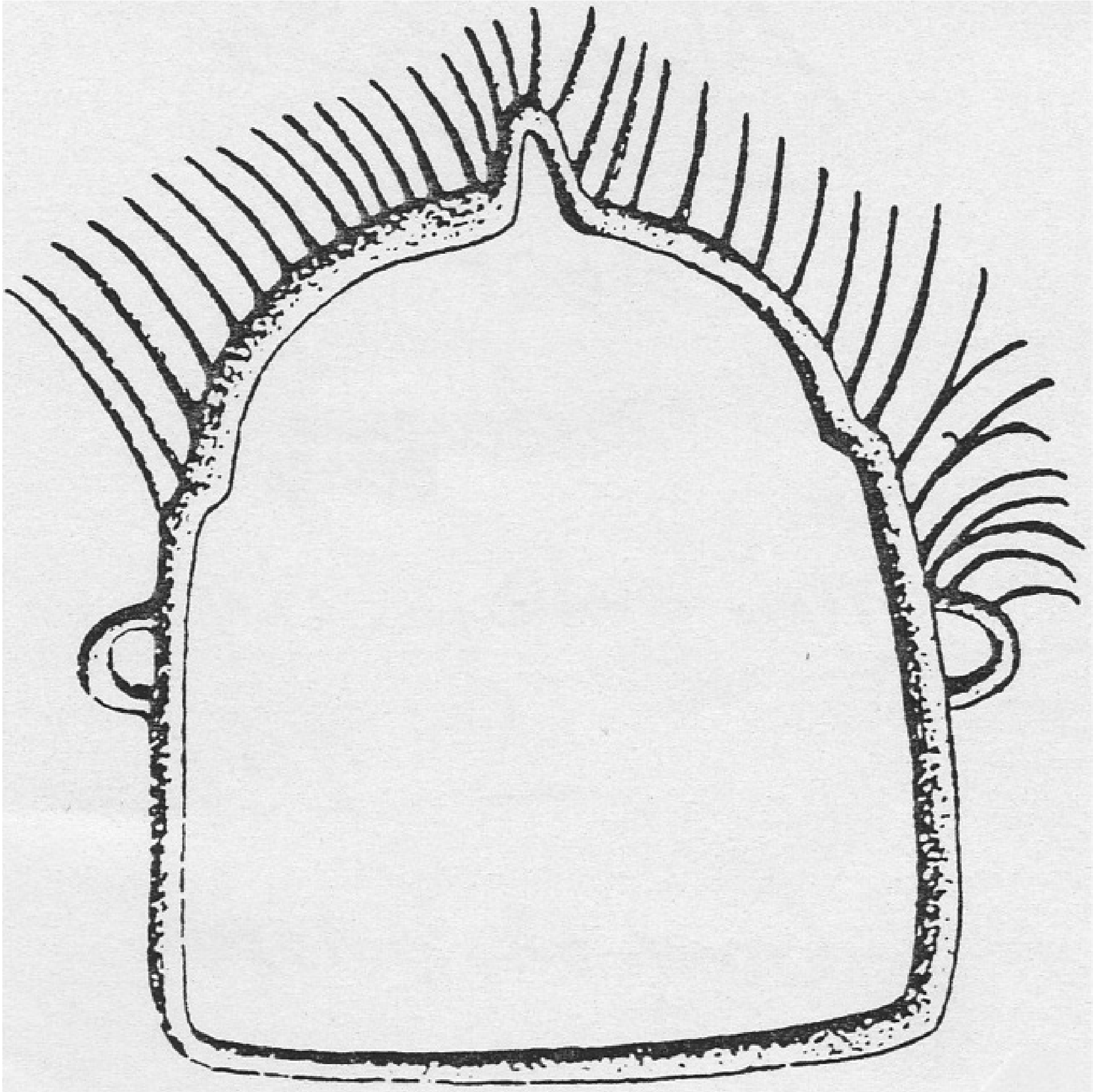


Fig. 20a: Symbol of the pregnant belly of Mother Earth in a passage grave (Brittany)

Added to this was the idea that the deceased lived on as female and male ancestors in the tombs and funerary temples, which were regarded as a specific local Underworld or Otherworld. It was considered necessary to feed them there, as the other part of the clan—shown by the food offerings given typically as funeral gifts. But Mother Earth also provided for them with her milk, as indicated by the pairs of breasts carved in stone in several gallery graves in France. ←219 | 220→Even from Egyptian mythology it is known that Hathor, in her aspect as goddess of death, fed the deceased from her breasts.[181] The U-shape under some pairs of breasts in these graves is by no means "necklaces"—how is it that necklaces are worn under the breasts? This U-shape is an abstract code for the maternal womb ←220 | 221→that is ready to bring life back up into the light (Fig. 20 b). Numerous folk customs point to the survival of the female and male ancestors in the Otherworld. Women who wanted to become pregnant, for example, slept on graves or in tomb temples, so that an ancestral soul would come to them to be born again. One piece of archaeological evidence for this is the famous, small sculpture of the "Sleeping Woman" from the Hypogeum of Malta. Ancestral souls lived not only in graves, but also in ancestor stones, ancestor springs, and ancestor ponds, where they could be conceived by women.[182] These beliefs and customs are spread around the world.

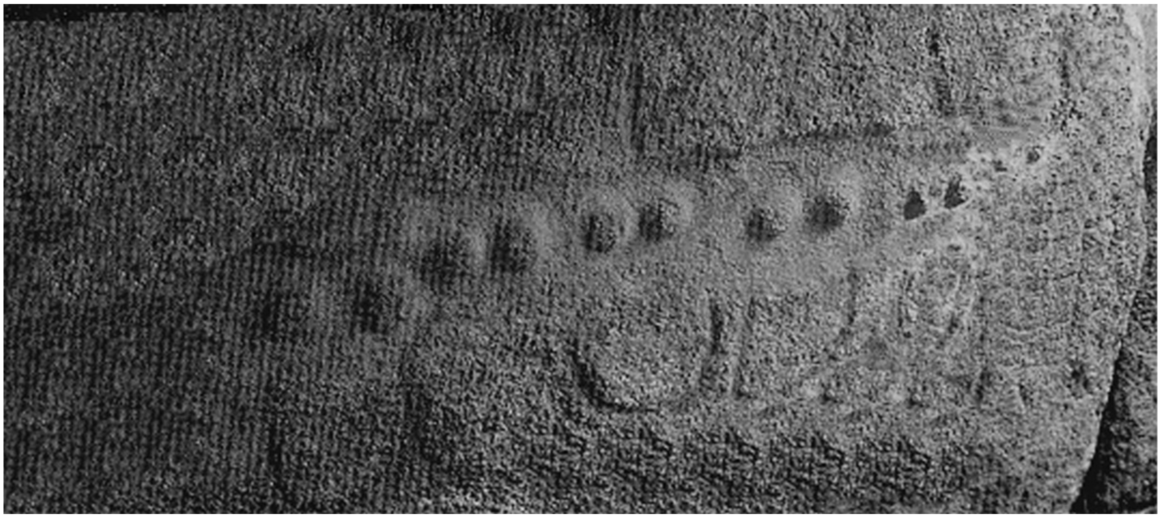
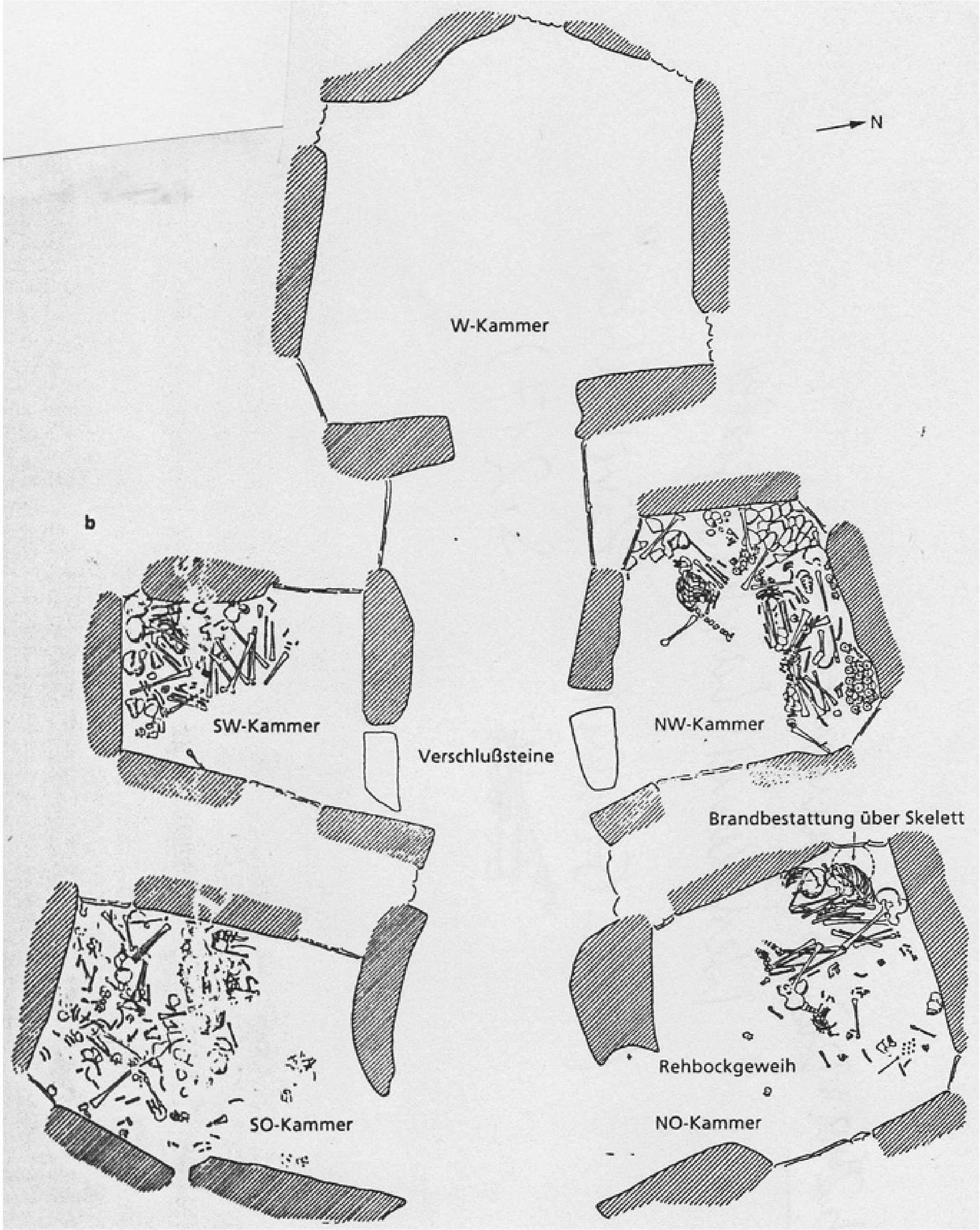


Fig. 20b: Pairs of breasts in the tomb of Kergüntuil (Brittany) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

The temples shaped like women in Southeast Europe (see Fig. 1) and the large temples in Malta, whose layout has the shape of a full-figured goddess, probably referring to Mother Earth (see Fig. 7 a, b), also support the femininity of the religious buildings. And the Maltese double temples Ġgantija and Mnajdra represent the traditional couple of "mother and daughter,” the matrilineal axis of life. Geographically far away in Northwest Europe, the 100 m long, imposing ←221 | 222→long barrow tomb of West Kennet (South England) with its five burial chambers shows the same female shape in its floor plan (Fig. 21 a). Still farther north on the Orkney Islands in Scotland, the house of worship in the village of Skara Brae has ←222 | 223→a female shape, being a somewhat leaner form (Fig. 21 b).[183] An interesting study has also shown that even the large artificial hill of Silbury Hill in South England represents the three-dimensional, abstract image of a goddess. This becomes obvious when, in spring, the meltwater accumulates in the big basin, which has been artificially deepened all around the hill. The shallow water then provides an abstract outline of the goddess, and the hill inside the pond protrudes as her pregnant belly (Fig. 21 c).[184] In this way, people shaped architecture according to their belief, just as Christians did millennia later with their cruciform churches. In the long eras of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, this belief revolved around rebirth out of the feminine.


N
W-Kammer
b
SW-Kammer
Verschlußsteine
NW-Kammer
Brandbestattung über Skelett
Rehbockgeweih
SO-Kammer
NO-Kammer

ig. 21a: Plan view of the five chambers of the long barrow tomb of West Kennet (South England)

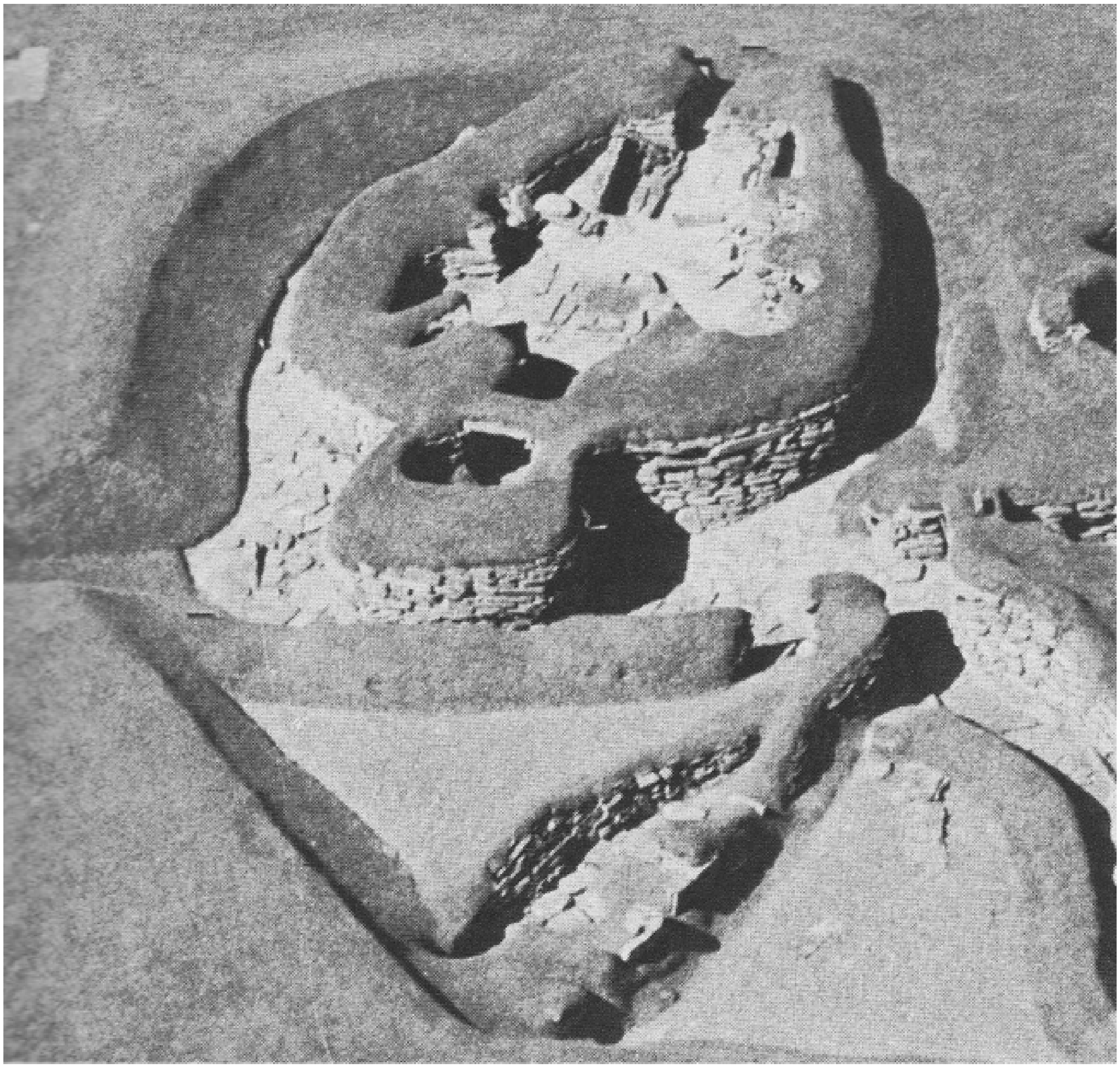


Fig. 21b: The religious house of Skara Brae in the Orkneys (Scotland)

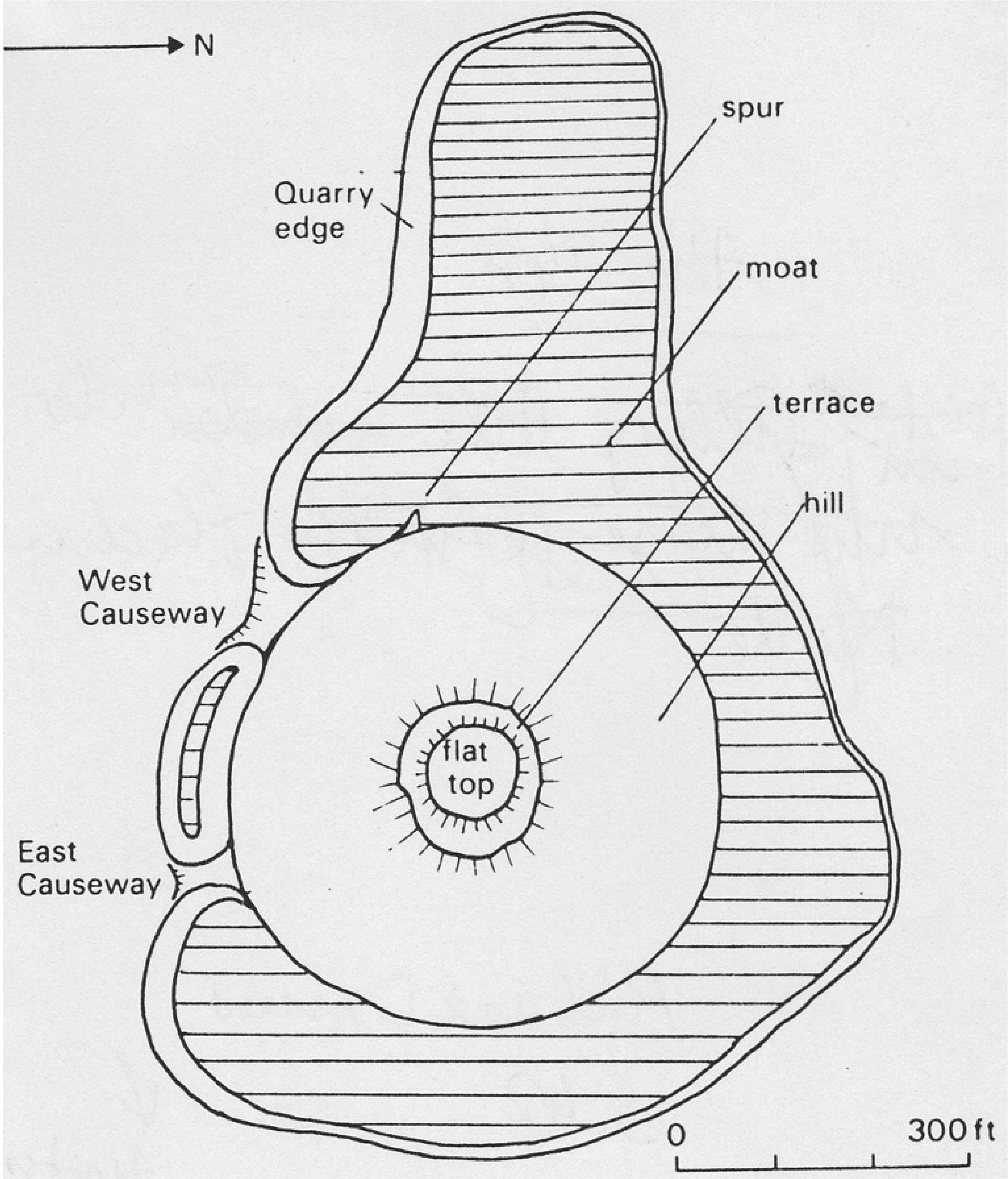
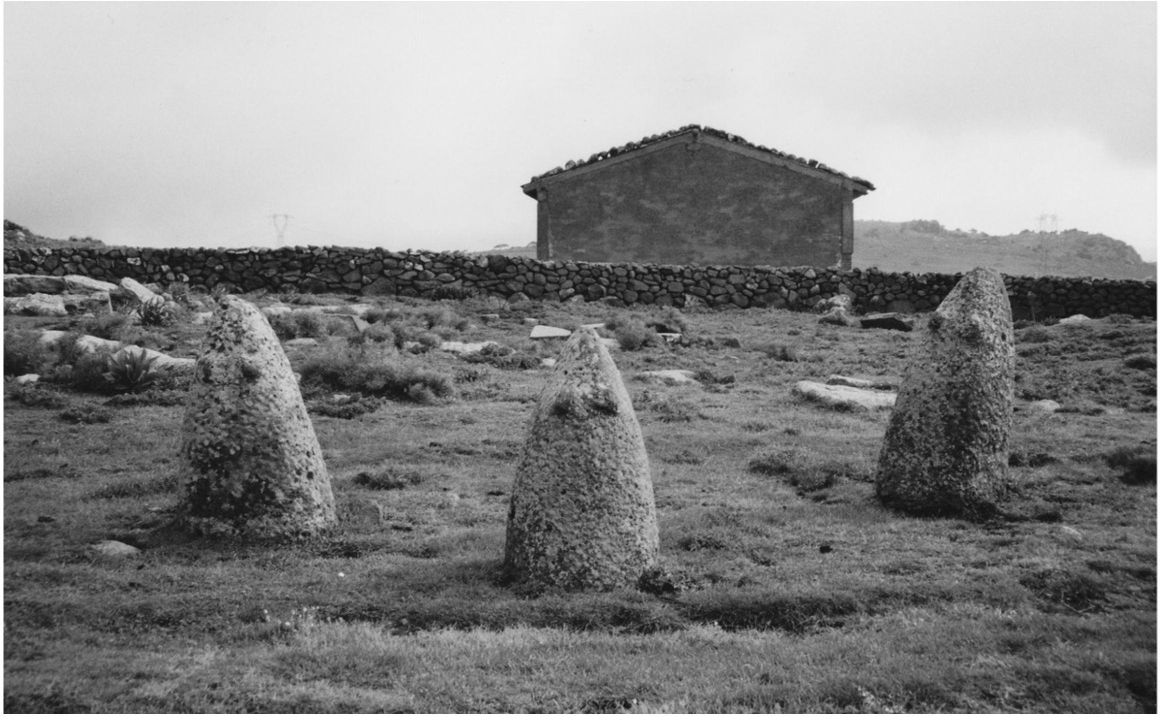

N
spur
Quarry edge
moat
terrace
hill
West Causeway
flat top
East Causeway
0
300 ft

Fig. 21c: Plan view of Silbury Hill, its flat basin filled with water (South England)

One important feature of grave furnishings is the position of menhirs and stone steles at the tombs. They stand there in front of the symbolic entrance to the womb as “guardian stones.” They can be seen in a huge, unshaped form, for examples, at the long barrow tombs of “West Kennet” and “Wayland’s Smithy” in South England (see Fig. 14 a), or in a delicate and smooth shape in front of almost every grave cave in Sardinia. This interpretation as “guardian stones” has been confirmed by an ethnological parallel. The matriarchal Khasi people in northeastern India used to erect megaliths almost up to the present day, the large, recumbent stones being considered as resting primordial mothers, while the high menhirs, which surround the lying ones in groups, represent their watchful brothers as guardians. The stones thus embody and perpetuate female and male ancestral beings of the mother line, to which the descendants turn with prayers and offerings in order to receive their blessing. The same interpretation has been made for stone arrangements in Tibet.[185] There is also an amazing parallel in Europe. In Scottish stone circles we can see an analogous arrangement because they also have a huge, horizontal stone, called the “Recumbent Stone,” flanked by two large menhirs as guardian stones.[186] Here, too, we find the resting ancestral mother flanked by two of her brothers as guardians.

←224 | 225→The view that Neolithic menhirs represent ancestral beings is confirmed by stones and steles with specific human characteristics, such as the “Pédras Marmúradas” in Sardinia, whose breasts clearly suggest they are immortalized female ancestors (Fig. 22). The distribution area of stones with female and male ←223 | 224→characteristics extends from the Caucasus to the Atlantic, and in some cultural regions they occur frequently.[187] By that the ancestral beings appear only in outline, with their heads drawn in and without arms and legs; they resemble the female ancestral figures on the “Mothers’ Wall” of Lake Constance (see Fig. 19 a, b). Ancestral steles with a crossed band or Y-shaped chest strap covering the upper body, for example from the Alpine region (3rd-4th millennium), are female, as shown by the primordial mothers of Lake Constance.[188] Breasts, necklaces, or owl-like faces and “crosiers,” formed like Neolithic sickles for cutting corn, also characterize them as female. As a consequence, they are steles of ancestresses, being clearly in the majority (Fig. 23, upper row).[189] Male ancestral stones have ←225 | 226→hammers, axes, daggers, bows and arrows, which are not "weapons"—as is usually claimed—but crafts and hunting equipment as well as symbols of prestige (Fig. 23, bottom row).[190] These stones and steles not only represent ancestral beings; people also believed the ancestral souls actually lived in them. Also, the custom of smashing such ancestral steles during times of significant change in order to set up new ones indicates a belief in their numinous soul power, which was taken from the old stones to pass it on to the new ones. This custom resembles the smashing of the little female ancestral figures, when a clan moved from the old house to a new one.



ig. 22: Female ancestor stones "Pédras Marmúradas" (Sardinia) Photo by Karin Kastner)

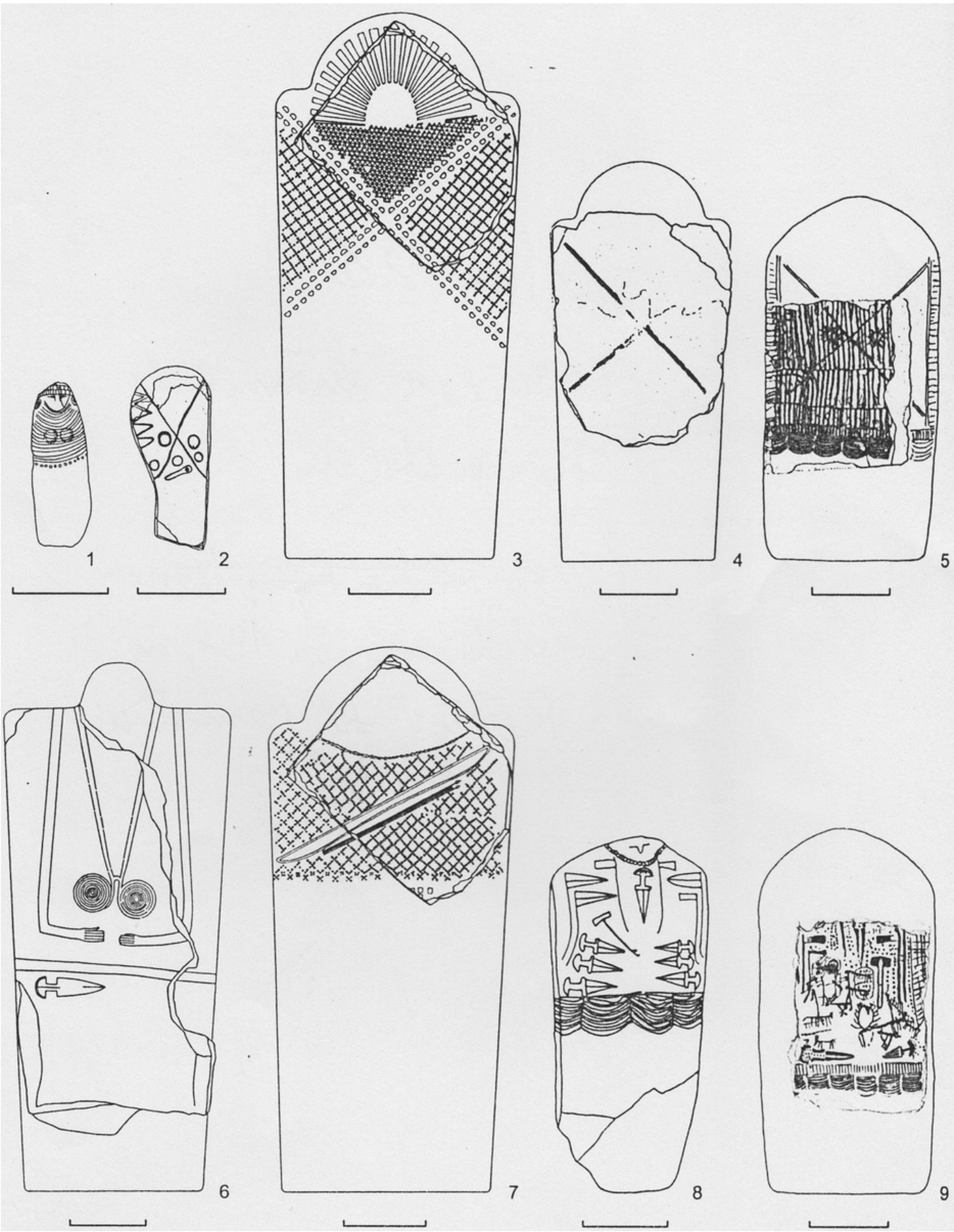


Fig. 23: Steles of female figures (1–5) and steles of male figures (6–9)

The Sacred Landscape

Burial mounds were social reference points for the communities in the area and also served as orientation for long-distance communication with other communities. However much the settlements may change, the tombs remained there and were built and extended over generations. In this way, the people of the region assured themselves a lasting identity, transforming the landscape into a social one.[191] The tombs, as “houses of their ancestors,” documented the affection of humans with the landscape. It was not simply considered “territory” for them, but held the history of their clans and their ancestors, which was inscribed in the landscape by the settlement patterns and grave monuments.[192]

But beyond that: with the cosmological references of the tombs and their meaningful emplacements, people created not only a social but also a symbolic landscape. They projected their religious symbolism onto the landscape, turning it into a sacred one.[193] One example is the form of the landscape near Lenzburg (Switzerland), where three hills were seen as a recumbent landscape goddess: the smallest being her head, the middle hill her elongated body and the largest her round, swelling hips. Precisely located in the small valley between the body and hips, a Neolithic cemetery was found with stone cists and burials in the fetal position (starting from 4,200). It is easy to see that here the deceased were literally buried in the “lap of the goddess,” the Mother Earth in her local form, so that their rebirth was assured.[194] Another example is the two “Gleichberge” or twin hills near Römhild (Thuringia, Germany), which, like other equally shaped twin hills, were considered to be “breasts of Mother Earth.” There are numerous such “breast hills,” and prehistoric places of worship regularly refer to them.[195] For example, close to the twin hills near Römhild, an area called “Grave Field” is situated, a zone that is almost covered with graves from the 3rd-2nd millennium, being considered the largest archaeological ground monument in Germany. The deceased literally rest on the bosom of the goddess who nourishes them in the afterlife until they would return to life.[196] Many other examples can be cited.[197] As the landscape was always regarded as a manifestation of Mother Earth who, depending on the local area, may have had different forms with different names: this results in many different landscape goddesses but they always refer to the *one* Mother Earth. The sacred landscape is shaped by her divine forms and forces. Until now, this symbolic relationship between grave monuments and the landscape has not been taken into consideration in archaeology because of the ideology of “taking over and possessing the land by elites.”

However, the Neolithic people not only emphasized the natural landscape with their religious buildings, but also transformed the landscape itself into a symbolic one, with large earthworks. The most magnificent example is the Avebury complex in South England. It encloses with its two curved stone avenues, in broad arches, the extraordinary Silbury Hill which was built at the same time and is situated exactly south of it (see Fig. 17 b).[198] With its spaciousness, this complex turns the area into a sacred landscape, a symbolic image of this landscape. Various interpretations are possible. Seen from the south from Silbury Hill, Avebury Henge could be the abstract image of a being with two breasts, whose arms or legs are widely spread, the latter representing the birthing posture. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Silbury Hill is a burial place, so that here the idea of rebirth out of the earth mother goddess is represented on a large scale. On the other hand, looking at Avebury Henge from the north, it looks like a big-eyed head with two beautifully curved horns, the image of the bull or cow horns so common in the Neolithic period. Since the Palaeolithic era, “woman” and “horns” belong together, and this symbolic combination continued in the Neolithic Age. Even in the millennia thereafter, we find it again as a divine bull or cow horn crown, for example in the Egyptian Hathor, in the Sumerian Inanna as a triple horn crown, as well as in very early African rock carvings.[199] It is the ancient, symbolic combination of woman and moon (the horns referring to crescents of the moon), of eternal change in time, from life to death and the return from death to life.[200]

The pronounced twin principle at the Avebury Henge is also noteworthy: two inner stone circles, the northern and southern, surrounded by the vast outer stone circle; two stone avenues, the southwestern

“Beckhampton Avenue” and the southeastern “West Kennet Avenue,” both ending in two circular buildings. Two types of standing stones (menhirs), the narrow “male” stones and the broad “female” stones in rhombus or diamond shape, are found in the outer circle and in the inner stone circles (Fig. 24 a, and see Fig. 17 a). This refers to the polarity of the world, as the Neolithic people see it. Besides many other poles, it is represented in the human sphere as the female-male polarity, but with the two sides always being in balance. This “polar cosmology” is a fundamental principle in the matriarchal way of thinking, which is—like in West Asia—reflected in the megalithic architecture. The stone settings in the middle of the two inner circles show this polarity particularly well (Fig. 24 b). In the center of the southern inner ring there is a presumably female D-shape of smaller stones, combined to the largest one single menhir here, the phallic “obelisk” (no longer present). In the northern inner ring there was a large stone chamber, “The Cove,” which collapsed in the 18th century, leaving two huge stones that clearly show the male and female forms (Fig. 24 c).

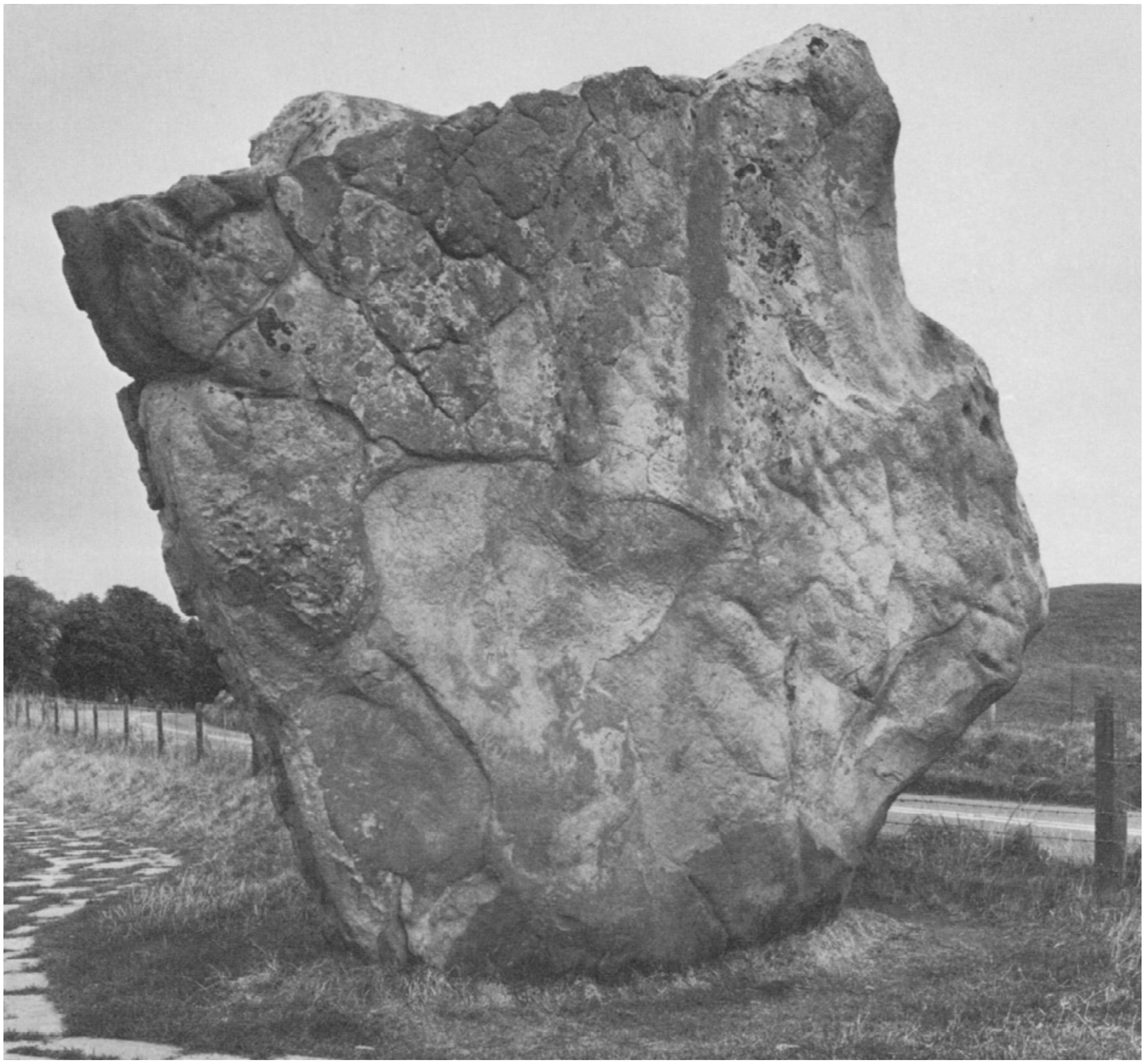


Fig. 24a: Example of the diamond-shaped, female stones of Avebury Henge (South England).

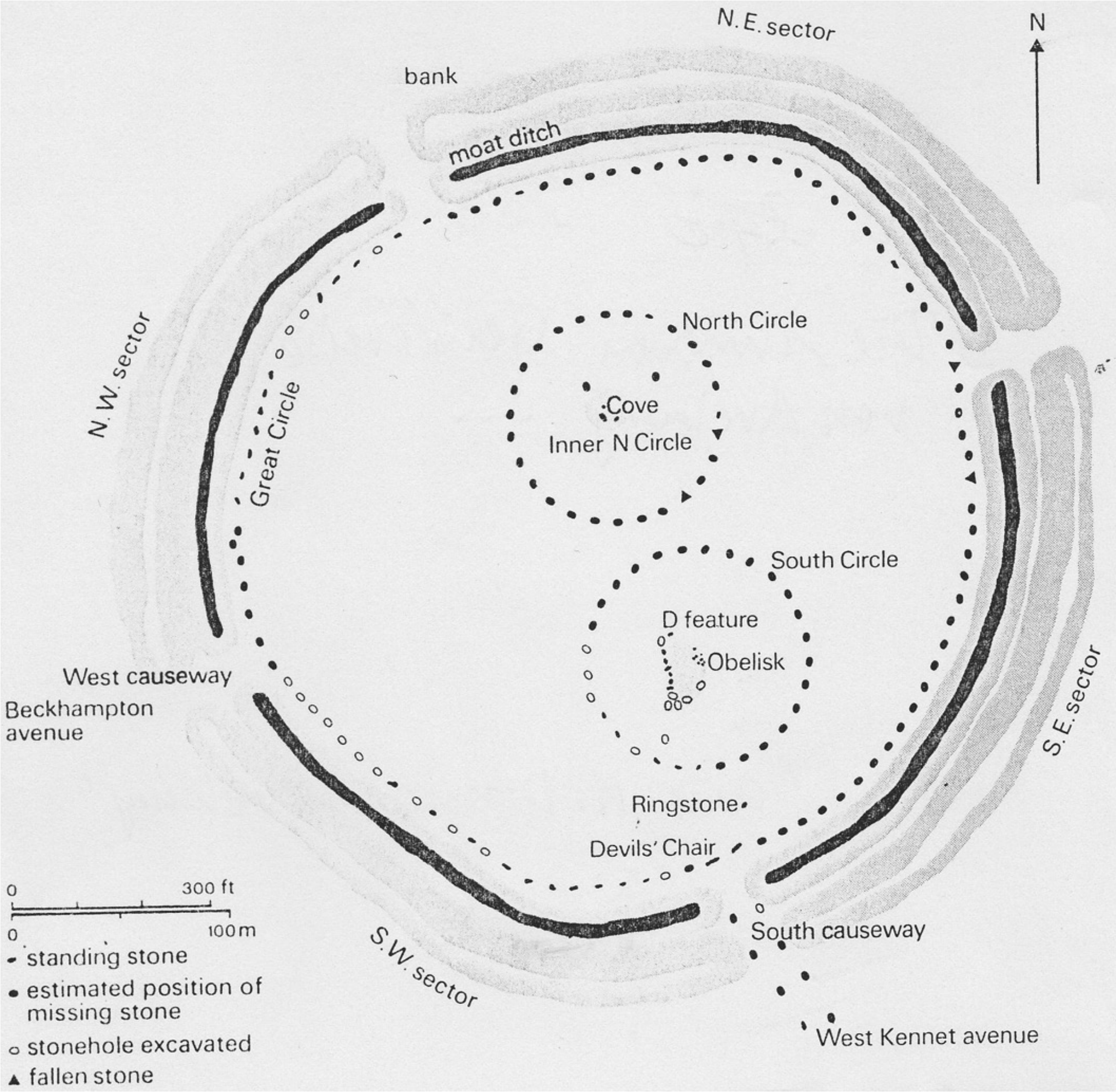

N.E. sector
bank
N
moat ditch
N.W. sector
Great Circle
North Circle
Cove
Inner N Circle
South Circle
D feature
Obelisk
West causeway
Beckhampton avenue
S.E. sector
Ringstone
Devils' Chair
0
300 ft
0
100 m
South causeway
standing stone
estimated position of missing stone
stonehole excavated
fallen stone
S.W. sector
West Kennet avenue

Fig. 24b: The inner stone circles of Avebury Henge with their central stone settings

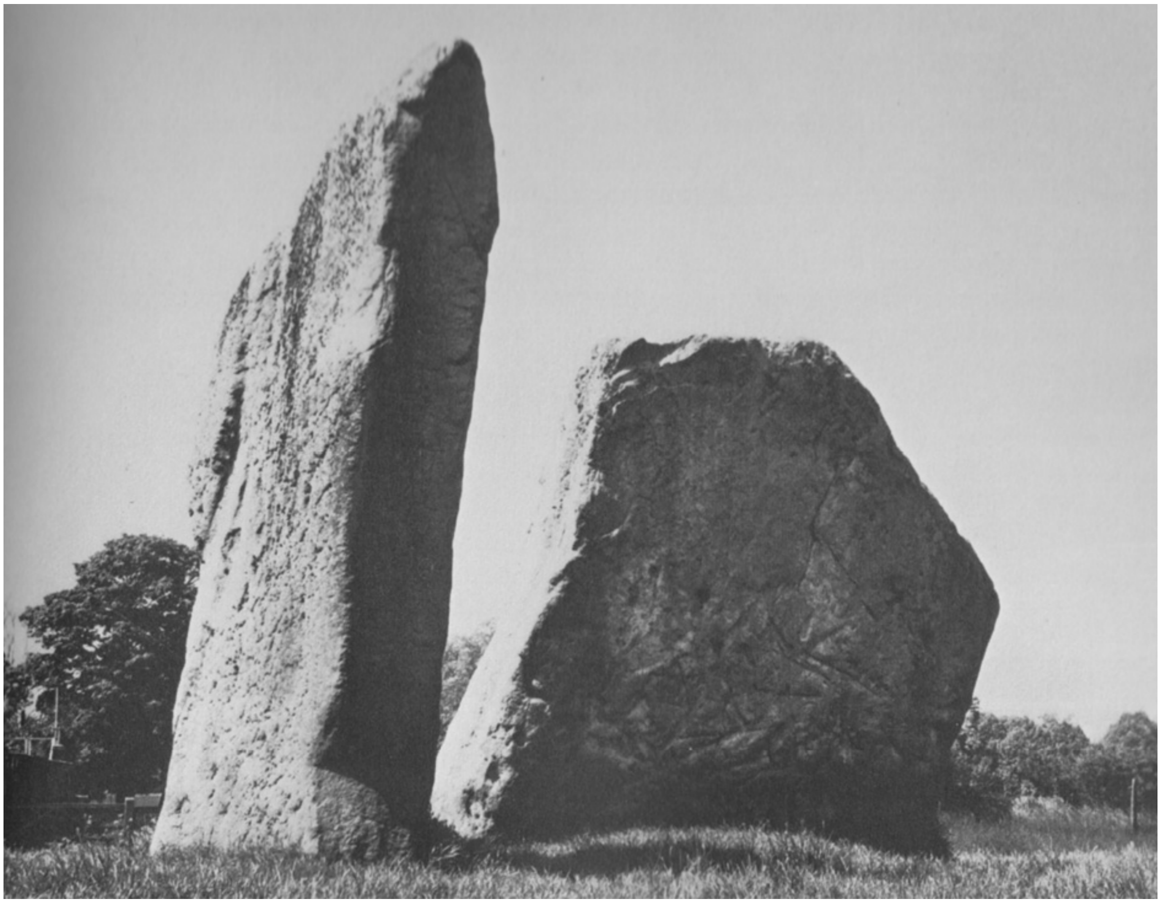
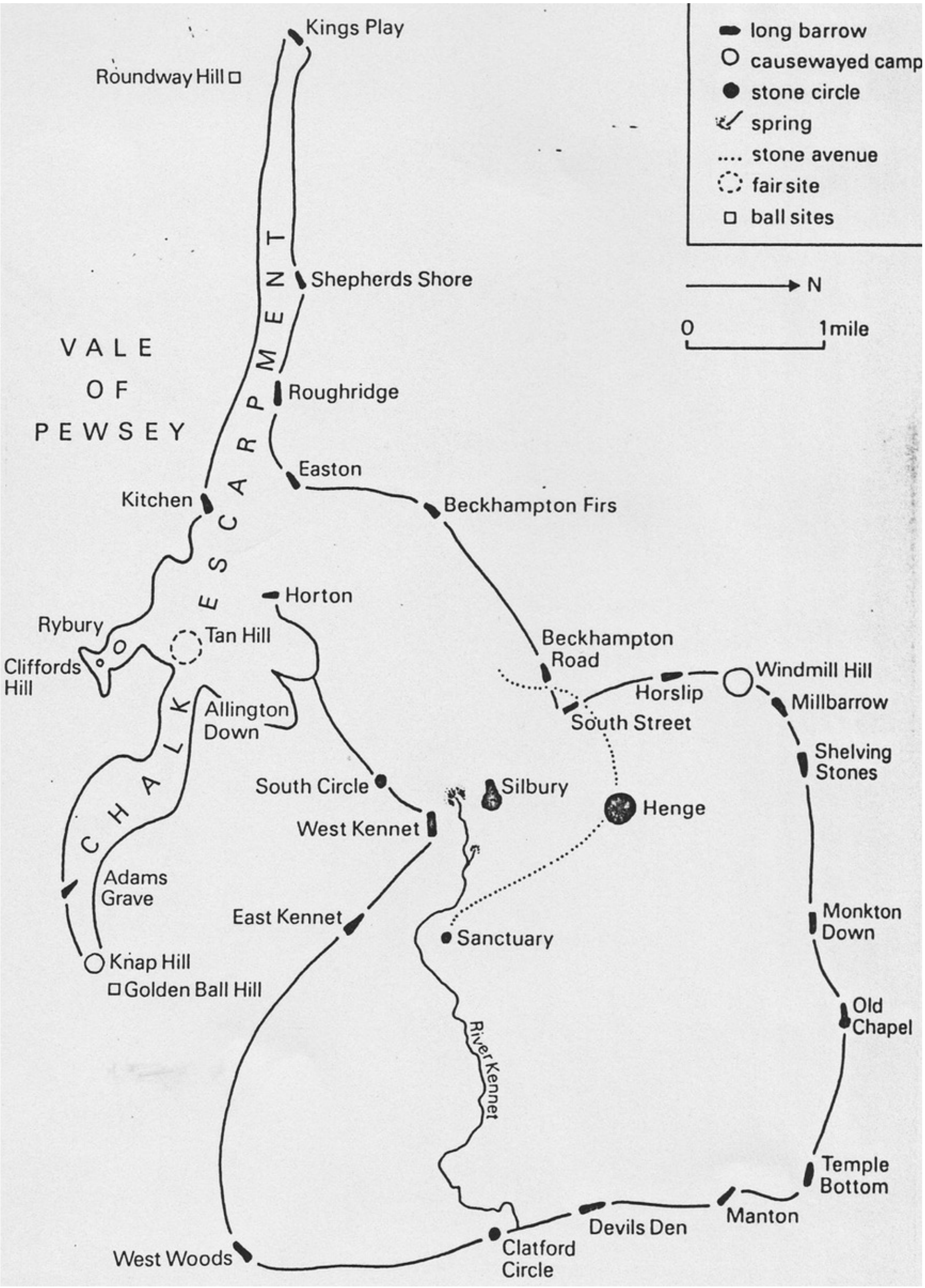


Fig. 24c: Male stone and female stone in the center of the northern inner circle of Avebury Henge

←229 | 230→ ←228 | 229→This explicit polarity has led to the interpretation that the Avebury complex was a temple for the celebration of sacred marriage (“hieros gamos”).[201] The two serpentine stone avenues are said to have been the processional paths of the groups from two different directions towards the sacred, central place. Before the procession began, they prepared for the encounter in the covered, sacred round buildings at the beginning of the stone avenues.[202] After arriving at the two inner stone circles of the Henge, the festival took place with great ceremony.—Although this interpretation is plausible, here again sacred marriage is misunderstood as a “fertility cult.” The point, as already said, was not about “childbearing,” but rather about an ancient, magical ceremony with the purpose of keeping the female-male polarity in balance and, with this, keeping the human world in balance and at the same time the whole universe. Therefore, this ceremony has nothing to do with the idea, which was alien to Neolithic people, that man has to copulate with woman so that she can become “fertile” and have children. In the matriarchal worldview, children do not come from the male lover—who has nothing in common with the woman’s clan—but from the ancestral souls of her own clan. Consequently, they did not believe the erotic act of love had anything to do with the act of birth, but rather with the importance of maintaining the balance of the world.[203]



long barrow
causewayed camp
stone circle
spring
stone avenue
fair site
ball sites
N
0
1 mile
Kings Play
Roundway Hill
Shepherds Shore
VALE OF PEWSEY
CHALK ESCARPMENT
Roughridge
Easton
Kitchen
Beckhampton Firs
Horton
Rybury
Tan Hill
Cliffords Hill
Allington Down
Beckhampton Road
Windmill Hill
Horslip
Millbarrow
South Street
Shelving Stones
South Circle
Silbury
Henge
West Kennet
Adams Grave
East Kennet
Sanctuary
Monkton Down
Knap Hill
Golden Ball Hill
Old Chapel
River Kennet
Temple Bottom
Manton
Devils Den
West Woods
Clatford Circle

Fig. 24d: Landscape image of the “Earth Goddess” formed by 27 Neolithic places of worship (South England) (24 a and c in: Aubrey Burl, *Prehistoric Avebury*, 21, 157; 24 b and d in: Michael Dames, *The Avebury Cycle*, 115, 190)

The formation of sacred landscapes in the image of Mother Earth, occupying an area with places of worship in a particular arrangement, is a widespread feature in Neolithic cultures. It led to the phenomenon of “landscape temples.”[204] One interesting example is the composite image of the divine Earth Woman, which is formed by connecting the 27 Neolithic places of worship within the wider surroundings of the sacred Avebury complex (Fig. 24 d). Avebury Henge and Silbury Hill, together with the West Kennet long barrow tomb, are located in the lap of the giant landscape goddess.[205] It is very plausible that these connections between places of worship, which are within short distances of each other, were relevant in the Neolithic as they also offered lines of sight and communication.

Domestic Ancestress Worship

The worshipping of deified primordial mothers was not limited to graves and monuments, neither to special houses of worship. It occurred in every home, as can be seen from the small figurines and statuettes found there. These were not present in all European cultural regions, but appeared abundantly in Southeast Europe, as well as in the culture of the early LBK.[206]

It is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of figurines are female; out of all the Neolithic statuettes found, male figurines make up just 3–5%.[207] As a result, many male archaeologists have attempted to downplay this ratio and make female figurines “disappear.” They declared all figures without breasts to be “sexless,” even those with breasts as “anthropomorphic sexless idols” and many abstract figurines as “male.”[208] In this way they manipulated the figures to reach a roughly equal ratio. But breasts are not the only feature to represent females. It therefore seems strange to call penis-less statues from Malta, which have rounded, protruding hips, “eunuchs”—a custom for which nothing is known during the Neolithic period. In addition, abstract figurines also turned out to be female, for instance when one of them is holding an infant in her arms or is wearing a crossed ←232 | 233→band over her upper body. Male depictions, on the other hand, always have a penis, by which they are clearly recognizable.[209] However, it was impossible to master the overwhelming majority of female figurines in this way, so the most fantastic interpretations were imposed upon them: these small artifacts were dismissed as “dolls” and “children’s toys” or, worse, as “sex toys” for men to arouse their lust.[210] They are often still treated in this disparaging way today, which is merely a back projection from the sexist perspective of today and offers no gains in knowledge. In contrast, it still seems harmless when they are declared to represent “ordinary women.”[211]

However, the figurines were not made by men for their unsatisfied needs; in fact, it has been shown that they were made by women. Their location proves they were not children’s toys: they were found on temple altars, in circular earthwork enclosures, in caves and tombs, but especially amassed on house altars, on small platforms beside the sacred hearth and at the oven in the yard. This situation points to their great importance for rituals and festivals of the houses’ community. Miniature figurines were also worn as amulets on collars. This contradicts the interpretation that they represent ordinary women. In addition, they have special features that distinguish them from ordinary women: they are wearing masks, sitting in an enthroned posture, presenting their vulvas and breasts, using blessing gestures, having symbolic paintings and scratches on their bodies.[212] Today, the view is gaining ground that these figurines and statuettes represent female ancestors as primordial mothers. Such an abundance of primordial mothers is clear evidence for the mother lineage of the clans, as otherwise we would expect to find a large number of male figurines of this type.

The place where they were found in the large longhouses of Central European LBK culture also supports the view that they are venerated ancestral mothers. In the northwestern part of each house, separated by an additional plank wall, there was a small chamber with an ancestress figure enthroned on a raised wooden pillar. Such clay figurines were found in this niche, and they had been deliberately smashed when the house was given up. The chamber represented a domestic shrine. This can be seen because, behind the house, ritual acts took place in rectangular pits situated north, with which this northwest chamber was ←233 | 234→integrated.[213] In the symbolic Neolithic thinking, North and Northwest were considered the cardinal points of the night, the stars and the Otherworld of the ancestral souls. These seated ancestress figures demonstrate a majestic pose with their arms set akimbo, or they are holding a round vessel into which sacrificial offerings were put (Fig. 25 a, b). In the LBK, there were also individual, male seated figures with such a round vessel. This immediately sparked the imagination of the male archaeologists. These figures were said to represent each a “clan chief” who “sits dignified on a throne between two warriors” and expresses his “power and claim to domination.”[214] Far more appropriate to this culture, however, is to assume they are venerated male ancestors, as the outstanding mother’s brothers by the side of the ancestresses had been seen.

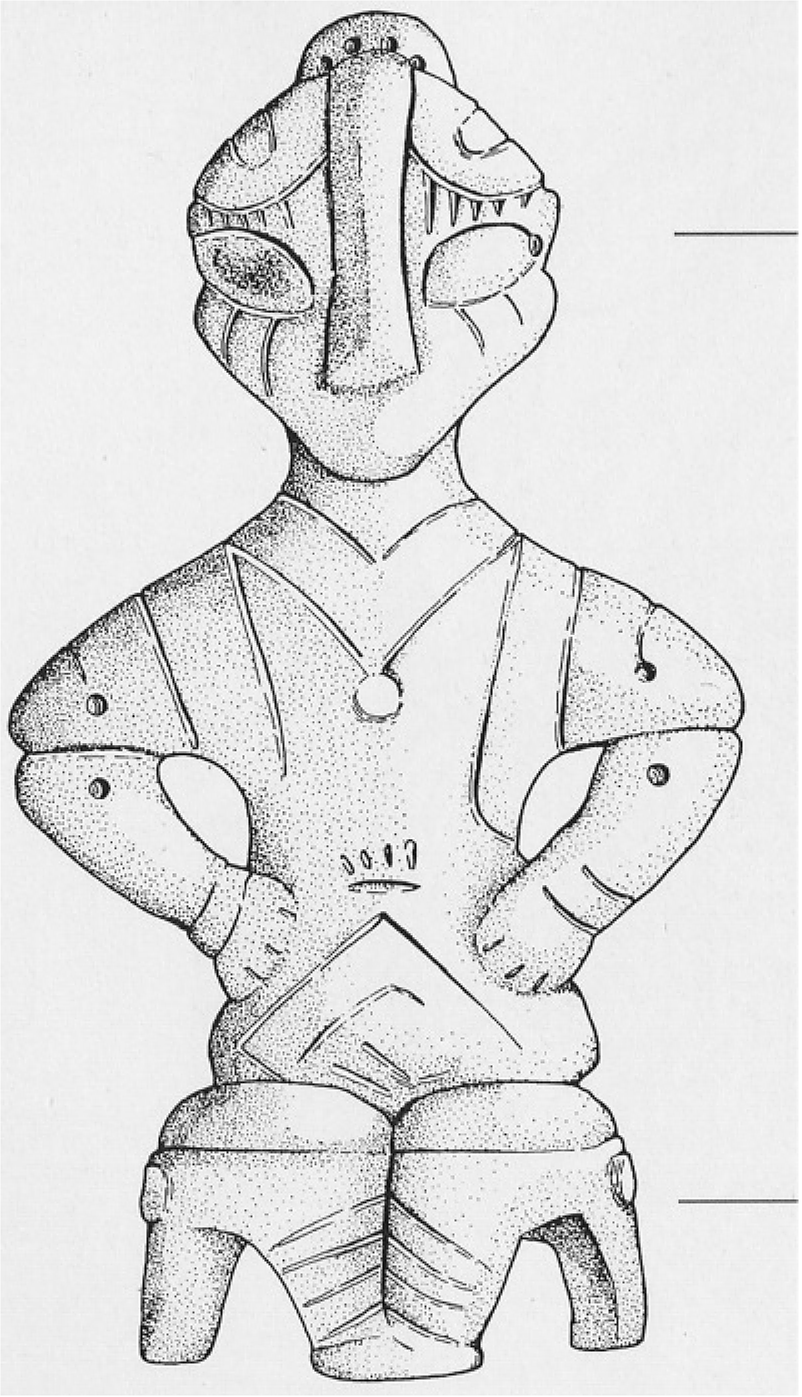


Fig. 25a: Enthroned figurine wearing a mask, Vinča culture (Serbia)

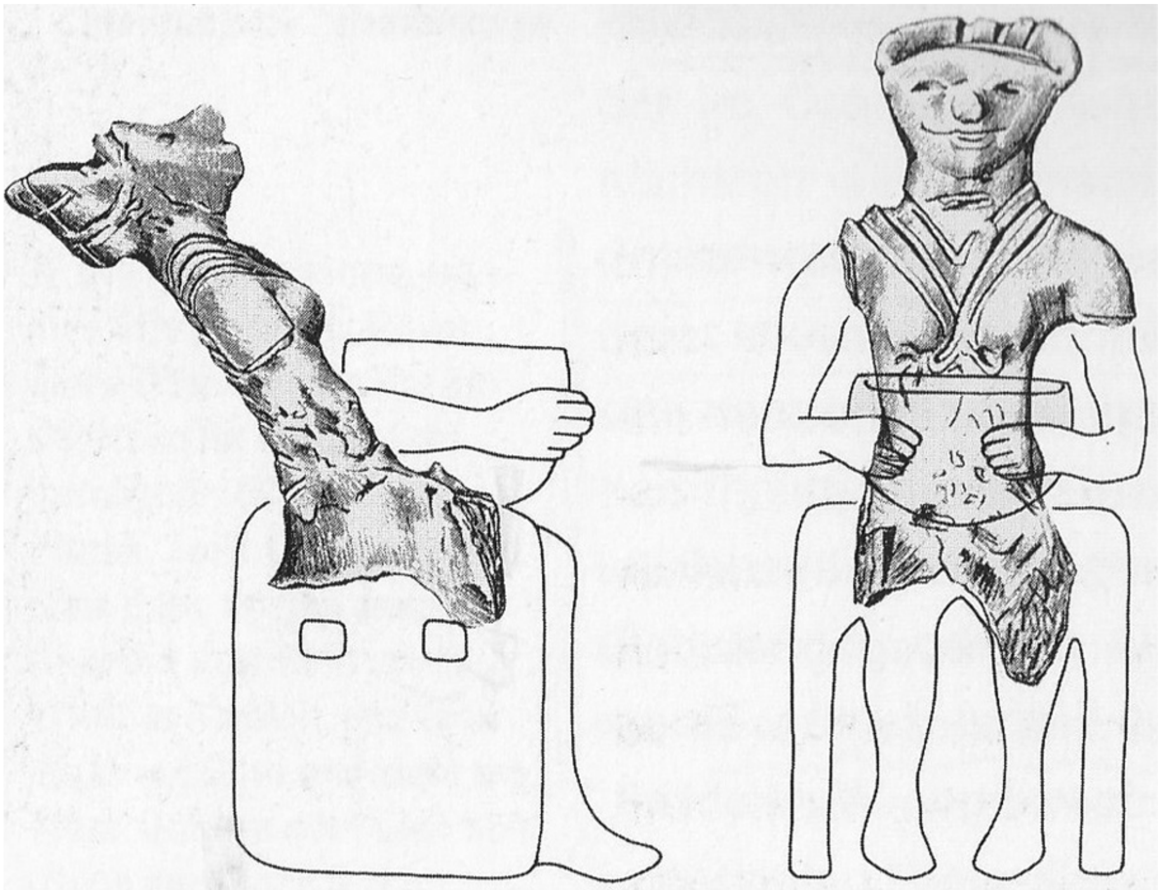


Fig. 25b: Enthroned figurine holding a bowl, side view and front view, LBK culture (West Hungary)

In particular, with these figurines mythical narratives and scenes were set up, both by their varied shape and their special arrangements in groups. They sit or are enthroned on altars and sacred platforms, some of them having peculiarities that suggest a story we no longer know.[215] For instance, in Tibetan shamanism, mythical narratives are represented in the same way by setting the scene with figurines made of wood or dough. Thus, mythical narratives from primordial times and from the history of the clan could have been repeated at the domestic celebrations of life stages and at other festivities, transposing these beginnings into the present. These celebrations of life stages: birth, initiation, end of life, funeral, were entirely in the hands of women.[216]

The Issue of Goddesses

Primordial Mothers, Earth, Moon and Sun

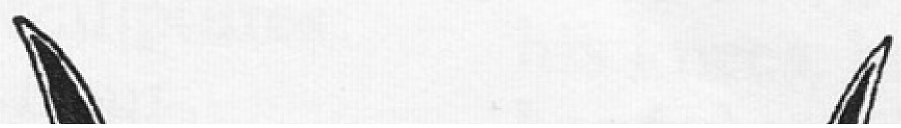
←234 | 235→Can we now see goddesses in these Neolithic figurines and statuettes? This comes down to the question how ancestral mothers and goddesses differ from one another. We have already found an initial answer in the “Mothers’ Wall” of Ludwigshafen, which shows seven deified primordial mothers. They became mother goddesses of the seven native clans. There is no sharp boundary, but a continuum from ancestress to mother goddess. Deified ancestral mothers as the ←235 | 236→female founders of clans and tribes are a characteristic feature of matriarchal societies.[217] They belong to the oldest type of deities.

However, the prototype of every mother goddess is Mother Earth, in whose womb the deceased were laid and whose breasts were carved into the walls of the graves. Landscapes with breast-hills or lap-valleys or mountain ranges in the form of a reclining woman were considered to be local landscape goddesses. For humans, Mother Earth was evidently the “One with many faces and a thousand names,” just as landscapes can be diverse, but all belong to the same earth. Here we have the idea of the *one* mother goddess, although many other clan goddesses from the human world join her. In matriarchal thinking, the *one* comprehensive goddess does not exclude a multitude of other goddesses—as is the case in the divisionist and exclusionary attitude of major patriarchal religions with their one-and-only god.[218]

The cardinal points also had a symbolic meaning for Neolithic people, which can be seen in the astronomical orientation of houses, tombs, stone circles and megalithic structures. They enabled orientation not only on the earth, but also in the sky, and with their help people projected earthly relationships onto the stars. They observed that the sun, moon, and stars appear in the east and sink in the west, until they return from the east, as if reborn from the earth. For them, it was the same occurrence of life, death, and rebirth in the sky as for all beings on earth. This was particularly true for the moon, which also shows regular phases of waxing, fullness, waning and rejuvenation, which meant for them the same transformation from life to death and back to life. They considered moon and sun to be divine beings, too, which were regularly reborn from the womb of Mother Earth or Sky Mother. Many myths of origin of matriarchal peoples include such ideas, and they emphasize the femininity of these celestial bodies. In the myths of ancient America, the moon goddess in particular has the most important role, and in the myths of East Asia it is the sun goddess.[219]

←236 | 237→Evidence of the ancient worship of the moon begins in the Palaeolithic with women’s representations associated with cow or bull horns, this wealth of evidencing continuing in the Neolithic with bucrania, bull sculptures and bull-shaped vessels. The three visible phases of the moon: waxing, full, and waning, became the measure of time, according to which the lunar calendar was developed very early on. Neolithic artworks depict bull heads with stars on their horns, and in later civilizations bull figures with a crescent moon on each of their flanks were created.[220]

The moon was regarded as the goddess of change par excellence, thought of as a threefold deity. The female triangle, the triple spiral, the triangular ax and the double ax are abstract symbols for her, as well as the three colors of white-red-black, the predominant colors on Neolithic pottery. The symbol of the ax and double ax was widespread throughout Europe. Their curved edges, single or double, symbolize the crescent moon and were thus a sign of the transformation of life-death-rebirth. As a sacred ax, with this meaning, this symbol is carved in stone in temples, on menhirs and numerous megalithic tombs. It was also found in form of smooth polished objects made from precious stones, also in miniature. Sacred axes were never intended to be used; instead coarse working axes were found in much smaller numbers in the houses. This lunar symbolism is most beautifully developed in the Cretan double-ax as a sacred object (Fig. 26).[221]



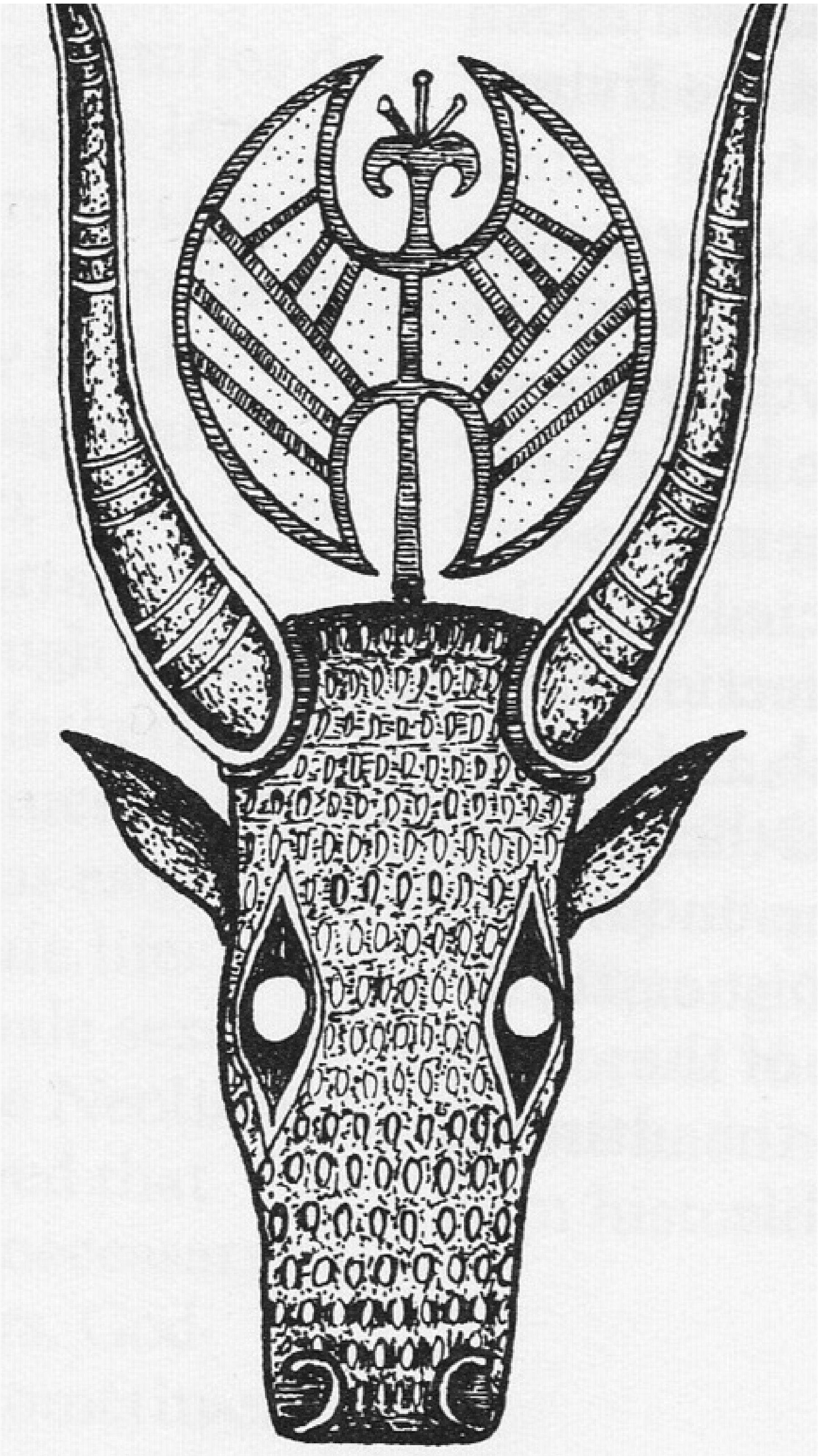


Fig. 26: Symbol of the double-ax between the horns of a bull’s head; this double-ax also represents a schematized butterfly, Minoan culture (Crete)

In the Neolithic era the sun was also considered a goddess because of its life-giving powers. The astronomically oriented stone circles are focused on the sun, because the main cardinal points were calculated from its movements. These are followed by the lines of sight between places of worship, becoming religious lines and the earliest overland paths. Neolithic symbols for the sun are spirals or concentric circles around a little cup in the center that have been found carved everywhere in stone slabs.[222] Presumably, these circle carvings served as small sundials. The motif of the eyes was derived from this, appearing twice as a concentric spiral, for example, on the temples of Malta and in rock tombs on Sicily. In some ←237 | 238→languages “eye” and “sun” are linguistically synonymous.[223] The eye of the sun goddess gives light, which represents a sign of hope in the tombs, and it means watchful protection, making this widespread eye motif so popular. Because of its horns, which are formed as a double spiral, the ram was considered a sun-animal, as Neolithic pictures show.[224] To this day, the constellation of Aries is the symbol of the beginning of spring with the increasing arc of the sun. Another sun symbol is the halo, which radiates, for instance, around the heads of the ancestral mothers on the “Mothers’ Wall” of Lake Constance and of a female stone stele of Sion (Switzerland).[225]

Figurines and the Triple Goddess

A hot archeological dispute, which is still raging, revolved around the interpretation of the thousands of small female figurines and statuettes. Meanwhile, a ←238 | 239→broadly agreed view has formed that they are ancestral figures. But if human-shaped menhirs and steles, even the paintings in religious houses, represent deified ancestral mothers, then it is hard to understand why the figurines should not also symbolize deified beings. In fact, they are the small, transportable counterpart to the colossal figures at the tombs, in temples or houses of worship.

To deny their religious character, a strange hypothesis was developed that their special qualities and the signs on them are nothing more than “fashions in clothing” without any sacred meaning.[226] This is contradictory to the fact that the figures are recognized as female and male ancestors, not as ordinary persons. Nevertheless, at an exhibition on the LBK culture, the band-like ornaments on the bodies of the figurines were broadly presented as “garments” and the patterns on their heads as “hair fashion” by archaeology students in an “fashion show.”[227] However, the initiator of this exhibition himself wrote about these figurines, which occur from West Asia to Europe: “Everywhere they are depicted naked, sometimes with symbolic ornamentation.”[228] And only in the Central European LBK culture are they supposed to be dressed—did the ancestresses here feel too cold? And why should they wear trousers here, without exception, as their legs were clearly separated by an indent—were trousers already in fashion for women in the Neolithic Otherworld?[229]

This attempt to trivialize the figurines was necessarily unsuccessful, because the statuettes are not realistic at all, as should be expected were they to represent the clothing of that time. In addition, the same band-like decoration appears on vessels and animal figures, who certainly wear no clothes. An attempt was made to save this clothing hypothesis by explaining the alleged “clothing” was due to the ritual costume of priestesses and priests.[230] However, this does not answer the question of the ←239 | 240→meaning of the patterns, since religious representatives usually wear highly symbolic garments and not “fashion.”

Another interpretation takes the religious character of the figurines more seriously.[231] Here, the symbolic signs and patterns on the human and animal figures and vessels throughout the area where they were found: West Asia, Southeast Europe, Central Europe, and South Europe to Malta and Sardinia, are interpreted as codes for the religious worldview of the Neolithic people. This corresponds to their religious sites, namely tombs and altars in the temples and in the homes.

The characters found on clay tablets and religious objects from the early Vinča culture (6th millennium) must be distinguished from the symbolic ornaments on figurines. They have a clear system of character formation, although these have not yet been deciphered as writing. This writing from the Danube cultures dates back much further than the cuneiform script of Mesopotamia, the hieroglyphs of Egypt and of Crete and the writing of the Indus culture.[232] But it is not the first writing ever, since the small sign tablets in East Anatolia are even older.[233] This does not exclude the possibility that systematic characters in different cultures were developed independently and in different styles. For sacred cultures, writing is always “holy script” because, when it began, since the Palaeolithic, it was dedicated to a religious content.

The religious worldview, which can be deduced from the Neolithic symbolic decoration, is all about the cyclical events of the creation of life, sustenance of life, death and rebirth that depend on the feminine, which was worshiped as divine. Therefore, the figurines have also been interpreted as representing goddesses with the following different abilities.[234]

First, the goddess is described as the “giver of all life,” creating everything out of herself via parthenogenesis, that is, without male help. She was considered to be the mistress of wild nature, of mountains, rocks, the bodies of water, forests, and animals, as well as the guardian of the healing springs from which she bestows health. She was represented as a bird goddess, especially as a water bird, but she also appeared as a wild animal such as female bear and doe. Her symbols ←240 | 241→ are breasts, vulva and birth, her sacred animal the ram, and in West Asia felines such as the panther, leopard, and lioness or lion. She brought back the light of the sun up in the sky or in a ship across the sea.

Second, the goddess is described as the self-renewing, eternal Mother Earth. She is the pregnant goddess, in whose voluptuous body life rests and then emerges once again, shown by the graves’ architecture symbolizing the womb. In the Palaeolithic Age she was the mother of wild plants, in the Neolithic Age of cultivated plants, particularly crops and therefore became the goddess of grain and bread. Her figurines have often been found next to ovens. Her sacred animal was the fertile pig. As “Mother Earth” she enjoyed the highest respect from the earliest to the very late eras.

Finally, the goddess is described as the giver of death and rebirth. She was seen as the one who determines death and return, which necessarily alternate, in humans, animals and plants. As a destroyer she ruled over the wild forces of nature such as storms, lightning and thunder, at the same time representing the eternal law of change in the lunar cycles and the annual movements of the sun. She kept the balance between all living things, so that no-one would transgress the bonds of its realm. In West Asia she was depicted as a vulture goddess, in Europe as an owl or raven. Another of her figures was the poisonous snake. Her sacred animal was the dog. It was imagined that she lived in the Underworld, in caves, tombs and ponds. At the same time, she was associated with symbols of rebirth, because her image was found in tombs as a rigid, naked figure with a large pubic triangle promising hope.[235]

This interpretation is supported not only by the symbolic signs but also by the special features of the female figurines that distinguish them from the normal world: they have heads in bird or snake form or wear masks of these animals, snakes as hair and not a hairstyle as a “little curly head,” they sit on thrones of wild animals, have oversized breasts or vulvas, bull-horns on their heads, and are winged figures like butterflies, bees, etc.[236] Here, the interpretation as “ancestresses,” as true as it is in many cases, reaches its limits. Another view, that they are “priestesses,” is based on the masks that many of these figurines visibly wear, although this would not contradict the goddess interpretation. In the shamanism of many indigenous peoples, female and male shamans wear the masks of those deities they serve during the rituals. People believe that, in the shamanic trance, the respective goddess comes to and speaks through the female shaman. In this state of ecstasy, the shaman embodies the divine being, for a short period of time she and the goddess are one. This shows that there is no absolute division between god and humankind as in patriarchal religions, but a continuum between the divine and the human, as believed by matriarchal peoples. They see the entire world with all living beings as interwoven by divine forces.[237]

In the Palaeolithic and Neolithic epochs and long after, “priestesses” were actually shamans and acted as intermediaries between the divine forces and the people, as healers in their communities and as guardians of their tribes’ tradition. Female shamanism is not something special, but very old and represents a prototype of religion, which you can see, for example, in the ancient female shaman tradition of the “Wu” in China, the “Mudang” in Korea and the “Miko” in Japan.[238] In this respect, for the Neolithic people, the goddess was always present, be it in deified ancestral mothers, be it in the ritual of the female shamans or be it in the manifold forces of nature.

This makes it clear that the goddess was not understood as a single, monolithic figure, but was seen and worshiped in many apparitions and variants. Her different forms were regarded as being interwoven through the seasonal cycle of the year and cycle of life stages, with her threefold nature already emerging in the Neolithic era.

She developed even further as the Triple Goddess in the Bronze Age. Here, in the first aspect, she was the youthful giver and rejuvenator of life, especially in the bird form. As the one who brought back the light, she was considered to be a manifestation of spring and of the sky. In this sense, she was the “White Goddess” who gives light and life, and was usually associated with the moon, though sometimes with the sun. Examples of white goddesses, since later epochs known by name, with their roots going back to the Neolithic epoch are: the Celtic Brighde/Brigit, the “Radiant,” the virgin Bringer of Light; the Celtic Rhiannon-of-the-Birds as well as all goddesses who appear in bird-form; the Cretan Eileithyia or Greek Artemis, the midwife and mistress of the animals, who also has the shape of a female bear; the Roman Diana, the mistress of the wild nature.[239]

←242 | 243→

In the second aspect, the goddess appeared as the maternal and nourishing earth, bringing forth all the fertility of the land and sea in summer. She is the woman, full of life and vigor, who gives nourishment and abundance of life. In that sense she is the “Red Goddess,” in the ochre or red color of life. Goddesses who go back to her Neolithic figure and whose names were later written down are: the Greek Gaia, the Cretan Danaë and the Dana/Ana/Anu goddesses spread throughout Europe; the Central and North European Erda/Earth/Nerthus, who brought back the sun and new plant life by ship or on a vehicle drawn by cows; the Greek Demeter, the corn goddess, as well as all grain mothers.[240]

In the third aspect, she was seen as the goddess of death and rebirth. She took the form of the fearsome destroyer or the benevolent, wise crone. She was thought to exist in the darkness, in the night or the depths of the earth, where she dragged life down in autumn and winter. In this sense, she is the “Black Goddess” of the Underworld or Otherworld on remote islands in the west, where she transformed life, sending it one season later back up into the light. Examples of goddesses of this type known by name that continued their tradition from the Neolithic period into later eras are: the Greek, three-headed Hecate with her Hell-hound, an ancient moon goddess; the Russian Baba Yaga as a gruesome, but wise old woman; the Central European Hel or Holle, the mother of souls in the depths; the Celtic Morrigain or Morgane on her Otherworld-island Avalon; all triple goddesses of fate, such as the Greek Moires, Roman Fates, Germanic Norns.[241]

In this respect, the nature of the goddess was seen as threefold and at the same time cyclical. It corresponded to the three ages of life: young, adult, old, the three seasons on earth: spring, summer, fall/winter,[242] the three visible phases of the moon in the sky, the three zones of the world: Heaven, Earth, and Underworld. Later on, in the Bronze Age, she appeared as the Triple Great ←243 | 244→Goddess, the Mistress of Heaven, Earth and Underworld, and was worshiped in various cultures under various names.[243] This diversity and yet inner unity of the goddess, which even survived for a long time into patriarchal epochs, points to her great antiquity. As male gods are conceived in patriarchal societies, and not goddesses, the latter must come from earlier, pre-patriarchal eras. Since belief in them and their veneration among the common people could not be eradicated even in the patriarchal epoch, female substitutes were created. These took over the functions and symbolism of the goddesses, while simultaneously patriarchalizing the religious content, as happened in Europe by means of the Christian Mary and the female saints.

Let us summarize the findings of this chapter.

- The richness of the highly developed cultures in different European regions and the diversity of the activities carried out reveal the extraordinary inventiveness and skill of the Neolithic people. Similarly, the large earthworks and the megalithic architecture of that era require *stable traditions* and good organization, the enormous *increase in population* in the Neolithic period being highly significant. Some settlements grew to the size and complexity of *cities with the earliest high cultures* in Europe.
- At the economic level: The Neolithic societies of Europe received *the "Neolithic package" with agriculture and domestic animal husbandry, weaving, pottery and art* from West Asia and developed this independently over the following millennia. The people were highly mobile with their boats on the rivers and the sea, which contributed to the rapid spread of the Neolithic way of life in Europe. The diverse, self-sufficient *subsistence economy* was in the hands of women, while the men were involved in building community houses, temples, henges and megalithic structures, as well as in metallurgy. *Copper metallurgy* was particularly abundant in terms of mining and processing in Southeast Europe. Copper objects, among others, were part of the *luxury goods*, being used for cultic purposes and also conveying prestige. They were also passed on as gifts, establishing friendly links among the regions, but without making them interdependent. ←244 | 245→Despite technical specialization, the *equal distribution of goods* was practiced; no group could monopolize them. The economy was therefore an *economy of balance*. There were no wars, but occasionally feuds at times of ecological pressure. Inventions include: the plow, teams of oxen, and also the wheel and cart.

- At a social level: Even in Neolithic Europe, despite the increasing division of labor and the complexity of social patterns, no hierarchy in society with “Big Men” and “elites” can be seen. These societies were egalitarian, which is consistent with the appearance of Neolithic dwellings and settlements, as well as with the finds in the tombs. Women and men each had their own spheres of action that were equally interrelated; there was *complementary equality* between the sexes. The clans were organized based on *genealogy along the maternal line (matrilinearity)*, associated with *matrilocality*. The eldest women, as clan mothers, enjoyed the highest esteem, and at their side, the eldest mother’s brothers were also much respected as representatives of the clans to the outside world. Clan alliances led to the formation of a *kinship society.* The large-scale constructions were not the result of organization by “elites” but of self-organized community work, enhancing the *cohesion and religious identity* of local or regional communities.
- At the level of culture and religion: People developed further the *rebirth religion,* which was firmly anchored in Europe as early as the Palaeolithic era. During the Neolithic epoch, they dedicated imposing large-scale buildings to this religion: houses of worship, temples, circular earthwork enclosures, and megalithic constructions, as well as abundant small artwork: figurines and religious objects created by women. The symbolism on this artwork revolves around the same theme: *life, death and rebirth.* Women are at the center of the rebirth religion, and associated with this was the *worship of female and male ancestors,* whose rebirth was believed to take place through women and whose worship was performed by women.
- Goddess religion: Primeval mothers and ancestresses of the clans became *goddesses of the mother goddess type.* The *earth was considered to be the Primordial Mother* of all, in whose womb the deceased were embedded. Certain landscape features, like twin hills and round valleys, were symbolically understood as characteristics of Mother Earth and were sacred (sacred landscape). Celestial bodies such as *the moon and the sun*

were also regarded as powers of the feminine divine (moon goddess and sun goddess).—An analysis of their symbolism and functions reveals three aspects ←245 | 246→of the goddess: the goddess as *White Goddess* of the beginning, as the creatrix of life (first aspect); the goddess as *Red Goddess*, the maternal, nourishing bearer of life (second aspect); and the goddess as *Black Goddess*, bringing the end of life and the transformation from death to rebirth (third aspect). These aspects are not separated from each other, but interwoven through the cycle of the year and the life cycle in the Triple Goddess. The idea of the Triple Goddess, which was developed in the Neolithic, lead to all of the Great Goddesses of Heaven, Earth and Underworld in the Bronze Age and had enduring repercussions in the following cultural epochs.

Definition

With these characteristics at an economic, social and cultural level, the Neolithic communities in Europe demonstrate the classical *matriarchal form of society*. It appeared here, in its entirety, over thousands of years.

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1 *Eiszeit*, 334–337. This way of life is called a “forest hunting culture,” which again endorses the ideology that only men’s hunting created culture.

2 Remains of dugout canoes were found in Central Europe, dated to 8,000; see Schnurbein: *Atlas der Vorgeschichte*, 43–44.

3 An independent European development was assumed for some time, but new sites excavated in western Turkey and beyond the Sea of Marmara and the Bosporus on Greek soil prove this transition; see Mehmet Özdoğan: “Von Zentralanatolien nach Europa,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit*, 150–151, 158, 160.

4 Harald Haarmann: *The Mystery of the Danube Civilisation: The Discovery of Europe’s Oldest Civilisation*, Wiesbaden 2019, Marix Verlag; first in German: *Das Rätsel der Donauzivilisation*, Munich 2011, Beck Verlag. The numbers of the pages refer to the German edition, 18–20.

5 Özdoğan: Op. cit., 160; Jens Lüning: “Bandkeramiker und Vor-Bandkeramiker. Die Entstehung des Neolithikums in Mitteleuropa,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 179–181. – This hasty talk of “colonization” and “missionary work” ignores the necessary mechanisms of violence and the compulsive nature of proselytizing.

6 See this pattern in traditional Hopi settlements, which have each built a mother village, a daughter village, and a guardian village on their three mesas; Frank Waters: *Book of the Hopi*, New York 1963, The Viking Press.

7 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 13.

8 Jean Guilaine: “Die Ausbreitung der neolithischen Lebensweise im Mittelmeerraum,” in: *Die ältesten Monumente*, 169.

9 Detlef Gronenborn and Thomas Terberger: “Die ersten Bauern in Mitteleuropa – eine interdisziplinäre Herausforderung,” in: Terberger and Gronenborn (eds.): *Vom Jäger und Sammler zum Bauern. Die Neolithische Revolution*, Zeitschrift *Archäologie in Deutschland*, Sonderheft 05/2014, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt, Theiss Verlag, 12.

10 This wording from Lüning: “Bandkeramiker,” 178, 180, 181.

11 The reciprocal marriage of two ethnic groups was a political tradition in ancient Africa in order to create one people from different tribes. An interesting example is the emergence of the West African Akan peoples, whose origin is the reciprocal marriage of white Berber groups, who had crossed the Sahara Desert as migrants, with Black Africans on the west coast of Africa. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 17.

12 Haarmann: *Donauzivilisation*, 22.

13 Parzinger: *Die Kinder des Prometheus*, 187, 197.

14 Gimbutas: *The Civilization of the Goddess*, 11–26, 257.

15 Op. cit., 25–29.

16 It was the Lepenski Vir culture; Ibid.

17 Criş culture in Transylvania and Körös culture on the Tisza River in East Hungary, see Ibid.; Parzinger, 187, 195.

18 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 30–34.

19 Site of Basatanya in East Hungary.

20 Cucuteni culture, see Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 123.

21 Makilam: *Symbols and Magic*.

22 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 30–34.

23 See the map of chronology in Wolfram Schier: “Frühes Kupfer in Südost- und Mitteleuropa,” in: Gronenborn and Terberger, 50–52.

24 In Serbia they formed very early, for ex. the Vinča culture (4,900 to 4,600), in the Carpathian Basin from 4,500. Schier, 52. I. Matuschik, M. Merkl, Ch. Strahm: “Von großer Tragweite,” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten*, ed. Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg und Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Ostfildern 2016, Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 379–380. Eszter Bánffy: “Die Kupferzeit im Karpatenbecken,” in: *Jungsteinzeit im Umbruch. Die Michelsberger Kultur und Mitteleuropa vor 6.000 Jahren*, Karlsruhe 2010, Badisches Landesmuseum, 149–155.

25 For the dates, see Matuschik, Merkl, Strahm, 379.

26 Schier, 54.

27 See this wording in Matuschik, Merkl, Strahm, 383.

28 The origins of the far-reaching societal changes in Southeast Europe toward the end of the Copper Stone Age do not lie in copper metallurgy but in other facts such as the warlike invasion of steppe nomads (see Chapter 7 of the book in hand).

29 See an example in Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen*, 191–193.

30 An example in this epoch is Varna, a Black Sea port town with an egalitarian society and flourishing trade (5th millennium, Karanovo culture). Men’s graves were found there, including one very special one, which were brimming with gold and shell jewelry and also contained blacksmith tools (craftsmen’s graves). These blacksmith tools had not been used, but served as status symbols. Weapons needed for domination did not appear in the graves. See Ivan S. Ivanow: “Der kupferzeitliche Friedhof von Varna,” in Gerd Biegel

(ed.): *Das erste Gold der Menschheit. Die älteste Zivilisation in Europa*, Freiburg, 1986 (2.), Museum für Ur- und Frühgeschichte und Komitee für Kultur der Volksrepublik Bulgarien, 31–39; Ivan Marazov: "The Blacksmith as 'King' in the Necropolis of Varna," in: *From the Realm of the Ancestors. An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. Joan Marler, Manchester, CT, 1997, Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, Inc., 175–185.

31 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 62–71. Other important cultures were Karanovo-Gumelniţa in Bulgaria and Butmir in Bosnia, in the north joining the Theiss culture and the Lengyel culture, occupying areas up to Budapest and Vienna; see Op. cit., 53.

32 Ibid. The city of Selevac covered 80 ha and Potporanj near Vršac, 100 ha.

33 Op. cit., 103–105. Such cities have been Petreni with 500 houses and 4,000 inhabitants; Dobrovodi with an area of 250 ha; Majdanetske with 1,700 houses on 270 ha; Talljanki with 2,000 houses and about 10,000 inhabitants on 450 ha. These cities were discovered by Ukrainian archaeologists via aerial photographs and measured with magnetometers; only a few of the houses have been excavated.

34 Lüning: "Bandkeramiker," 177.

35 These are the La Hoguette culture in West Europe and the Ertebølle culture in North Europe; Gimbutas, 37–38; Parzinger 238–239.

36 See models of such ovens in Gimbutas, 60.

37 Op. cit., 39–40; Parzinger, 245.

38 Lüning: "Bandkeramiker," 182; Jens Lüning (ed.): *Die Bandkeramiker. Erste Steinzeitbauern in Deutschland,* Rahden/Westfalen 2012, Verlag Marie Leidorf, 152 and drawing 151. In the LBK the genealogical connection is not the father line, as it is claimed here.

39 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 196; Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 52–55.

40 Jens Lüning: "Seeufersiedlungen und Steinkistengräber. Die Cortaillod-Kultur," in: Jens Lüning: *Steinzeitliche Bauern in Deutschland. Die Landwirtschaft im Neolithikum,* Universitätsforschungen zur prähistorischen Archäologie, Vol. 58, Bonn 2000, Verlag Rudolf Habelt, 479.

41 Gimbutas: *Civilization,*196; Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 78.

42 This example in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie,* Chap. 6; for the sharing of gifts see also Lüning: Op. cit., 181.

43 Lüning: Op. cit., 157, 163–167. Such LBK longhouses are rarely reconstructed for open-air museums because the costs are extremely high. Therefore, only small, poor examples can usually be seen as models.

44 This structure is located near Nieder-Mörlen, a district of Bad Nauheim in Hesse (Germany).

45 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 284.

46 The towns where these six circular earthwork enclosures were found are, from east to west: Künzing-Unternberg, Osterhofen-Schmiedorf, Wallerfing-Ramsdorf, Oberpöring-Gneiding, Meisternthal, Landau-Kothingeichendorf. The monuments are no longer visible above ground, but are below farmland today; they were discovered via aerial archeology and measured with magnetometers. See the documentation in the archaeological museums Künzing and Landau (East Bavaria). See Rainer Christlein, Otto Braasch: *Das unterirdische Bayern. 7000 Jahre Geschichte und Archäologie im Luftbild,* Stuttgart 1990, Theiss Verlag.

47 The cardinal lines of the solar year are: the east-west direction, where equinoctial sunrises or sunsets in spring and autumn can be observed, as well as the northeast-northwest and southeast-southwest, where the sun rises or sets on the summer and winter solstices.

48 Helmut Becker: “Die Kreisgrabenanlage auf den Aschelbachäckern bei Meisternthal – ein Kalenderbau aus der mittleren Jungsteinzeit,” in: *Das archäologische Jahr in Bayern*, Stuttgart 1989, Theiss Verlag, 27 f. This exact geometrical form appears again only 1,500 years later in Stonehenge of South England.

49 Examples are: female figurine (Oberpöring), cattle horns (Goseck), human burial (Ippesheim). A circular earthwork enclosure with five-fold palisade ring (Quenstedt) dates from the 4th millennium.

50 Valeska Becker: “Glaube und erste Bauern,” in: Gronenborn and Terberger, 100, 102–103.

51 Detlef Gronenborn and Hans-Christoph Strien: “Linienbandkeramik und La Hoguette: Wirtschaft und kulturelle Dynamik im 6. Jahrtausend,” in: Gronenborn and Terberger, 37; see also: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Online edition*, August 17, 2015.

52 See the new conflict research: apparently the aim is only to find as many “massacres” and “wars” as possible (see topic “conflict research,” in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Online-edition*, January 22, 2016). Such a view is not only narrow but also tendentious, because a far more interesting question could be asked, namely which strategies people used to avoid or pacify conflicts. It is particularly problematic when today’s world is described as “generally more peaceful” compared to early epochs (Ibid.), despite increasingly frequent and increasingly cruel wars. This reveals the bias of this research and the tendency to whitewash or completely ignore current situations.

53 See this wording in Meyer, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Online-edition*, August 17, 2015; Schnurbein, 70; Parzinger, 249, and others.

54 See also the Critique of the new War Theory in Chapter 1 of the book in hand.

55 Gronenborn and Strien, 37.

56 Detlef Gronenborn: “Häuptlinge und Sklaven? Anfänge gesellschaftlicher Differenzierung,” in: Gronenborn and Terberger, 41.

57 This was the case in the SBK culture in Poland; the longhouses were now built in a slightly trapezoidal shape.

58 Gronenborn and Strien, 38.

59 The larger ones among the Middle Neolithic cultures are: Early Lengyel in southeastern Central Europe (about 4,800–4,400), the SBK culture in eastern Central Europe (Poland, East Germany) (about 4,900–4,500), the Rössener culture in West Germany (about 4,600–4,300), at the same time as the culture of Cerny in West France and Early Chasséen in South France.

60 The larger ones among Late Neolithic cultures are: Later Lengyel (about 4,400–4,000) in southeastern Central Europe, the cultures of Altheim and Mondsee (Austria), the Funnelbeaker culture (TRB) in the east and northeast (Poland, North Germany, Scandinavia), the Michelsberger culture as part of the TRB in Germany, and Chasséen in the west (France).

61 Gronenborn, 44–45.

62 Op. cit., 46.

63 See for this result of the latest research, Helmut Schlichtherle: “Kulturerbe unter Wasser,” in: *Steinzeit in Baden-Württemberg*, Stuttgart 2008, Staatsanzeiger Verlag, 78–79. –At first it was assumed that all these villages had stood in the water, then the prevailing theory was that they were on dry land at lake shores and only later, when the water level rose, did they sink into shallow water. The latest view is more differentiated and accepts the construction of the villages partly in shallow water, partly on the dry shore.

64 The oldest pile dwelling settlements were located on the northern Italian Alpine lakes, followed by those on the lakes in Carinthia and the Salzkammergut in Austria, on the lakes of Central Switzerland and the Swiss Jura and on Lake Geneva, on the Alpine lakes of France, on Lake Constance and on Federsee in Germany. Helmut Schlichtherle: “Einzigartiges Kulturerbe,” in: *Pfahlbauten. Verborgene Schätze in Seen und Mooren,* Stuttgart 2011, Staatsanzeiger Verlag, 8–9, map 10–11.

65 Jutta Hoffstadt: “Gefährlicher Weg über die Alpen,” in: *Pfahlbauten,* 73.

66 Schlichtherle: “Einzigartiges Kulturerbe,” 16.

67 Thomas Doppler and Renate Ebersbach: “Jahrgenau datiert – das Neolithikum im Voralpenraum,” in: Gronenborn and Terberger, 61.

68 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 156–159, 162–163.

69 The following account of Malta’s Neolithic culture refers to my own research trips to the archaeological sites there.

70 In the quarry, this rock is so soft that it can be cut with a saw, but it is very hard once it dries out. Even today, the traditional houses of Malta are put together out of this, like Lego.

71 For example, the temples of Skorba, Mġarr and the third, small temple of Mnajdra

72 Trilithon gates are “three stone gates,” a structure consisting of two large vertical stones, the posts, supporting a third stone set horizontally across the top.

73 The following account of the early cultures of Sardinia comes from my own research trip to the archaeological sites of the island.

74 All across Europe there are such myths of the “Little People,” which include the beautiful and magic fairies that often helped the people. According to these stories, in later, patriarchal times, they used to stay for a long time at their sanctuaries, which include tomb buildings from Neolithic cultures. See the Sardinian myth “Mariedda del piccolo popolo delle janas” (Little Mary of the Little Fairy People), in: Alberto Melis: *Fiabe delle Sardegna,* Firenze 1999, Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 37–63; also the myth “Le gianas,” in: Francesco Enna: *Miti, Leggende e Fiabe della tradizione popolare della Sardegna,* Sassari 1994, Carlo Delfino editore, 100–101.

75 The most famous is the large necropolis Anghelu Ruju near Alghero; other necropolises are San Andrea Priu near Bonorva, and M. Petrusu-Ploaghe, Corneddu, Sas Concas near Nuoro; Grotta di Bartolomeo, Grotta di San Michele near Ozieri.

76 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 290–292.

77 Ibid.

78 Examples of giants’ graves are: Coddu Vecchiu, Li Lolghi and Su Monte de S’ape in northeastern Sardinia; the tombs of Thomes and Biristeddi in the southeast.

79 See “La leggenda di Norace” (in Sardinian “Sa fabula de Noraxi”), in: Francesco Enna, 80–85.

80 The data from archaeologically explored cave settlements with Neolithic beginning showed for South France: Cap Ragnon (about 7,970), Île Riou (aboveground settlement, about 7,600), Château-neuf-les-Martigues (about 7,420), all close to Marseille; for Spain: Abrigo in Cuenca, Meseta (about 7,950), Murciélagos near Córdoba (about 6,250) and others. See Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 186.

81 One scene shows men attacking each other with these weapons, which is not proof of “war,” but at most a feud; apart from that, this scene could also have symbolic meaning.

82 See the illustration of this scene in Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 188.

83 Op. cit., 206.

84 Chasséen in France, Lagozza in Italy, Cortaillod in Switzerland (lakeside settlements); Op. cit., 191.

85 Op. cit., 338.

86 Jean-Pierre Mohen: *The World of Megaliths*, New York 1990, Facts on File, Chapter II.

87 Examples of the oldest megalithic tombs: Tumulus on the island of Carn in Finistère; Tumulus of Saint-Michel near Carnac (217 m long); Tumulus of Barnenez in Finistère, approx. 4,700–4,300; passage grave of Kercado near Carnac, approx. 4,700 (all in Brittany); Monument I from Poço de Gateira of High Alentejo and others, approx. 4,500 (in South Portugal).

88 Mohen, 97.

89 The following brief account of megalithic cultures goes back to my own research trips to the archaeological sites in Brittany, Cornwall, South England, Ireland, Scotland and Germany.

90 Some of very large dimensions are the Dólmenes de Antequera in Spain.

91 "False vaults" are made from parallel stacked, corbelled stones held together by a big cover-stone. Contrary to this, "true vaults" consist of arches of stones, an architecture that was invented by the Romans (for example: Roman bridges).

92 In contrast to the Neolithic cultures of Southeast Europe, the megalithic cultures of West Europe have no figurines with signs and symbols.

93 Paul Sébillot: *Le Folklore de France. Les Monuments*, Paris 1985, Edition IMAGO, 43–44.

94 Other gallery graves in Brittany: Le Mougau at Commana; those with pairs of breasts: La Maison des Feins ("Fairy House") near Tressé; Kergüntuil near Trégastel; Prajou-Menhir near Trébeurden; with slanted stones in the form of arches: Tyr ar C'horriket. Half-buried gallery graves: Pierre Turquaise in the Paris Basin (France), Allée Couverte of Bager (Holland).

95 Examples are the rough, broad menhirs in front of the entrance of the Long Barrow Tomb of West Kennet and the broad menhirs in front of the Long Barrow Tomb "Wayland's Smithy" (both in South England).

96 Examples of such large menhirs are: "Grand Menhir Brisé" by Locmariaquer/Morbihan with 20.30 m and 350 t, today lying on the ground broken into 4 parts; Menhir of Kerloas, 10 m and 150 t; Menhir of Champ-Dolent, 9.50 m and 125 t; the upright and the lying menhirs of Kergadiou, 9 m and 10.50 (all in Brittany). However, there are also small menhirs of a few decimeters. Pierre-Rolland Giot: *Menhirs et Dolmens*, Châteaulin 1996, Éditions d'Art Jos le Doaré, 2–5, 10.

97 The most important of these alignments are: Le Menec with 11 parallel rows, Kermario with 10 rows, Kerlescan with 13 rows and 100 meters in width. Almost 10,000 stones were set up, of which about 3,000 have been preserved. See Mohen, 302; Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 419.

98 Examples are: "Rocking Stones" in South England, "Boitiner Steintanz" and "Steintanz von Lenzen" in North Germany.

99 Patrick Ashmore: *Calanais. The Standing Stones*, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland 1995, Urras nan Tursachan.

100 Examples of stone circles on the Orkney Islands: Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stennes; for oblong graves with divisions: Yarso tomb, Midhowe stalled cairn, Unstan stalled cairn; for round tombs with square chamber: Maes Howe, Quanterness, Quoyness; for a village: Skara Brae; for towers: Broch of Gurness, Broch of Midhowe (Orkney Islands), Broch of Mousa (13 m high, Shetland Islands). Cristina Biaggi: *Habitations of the Great Goddess*,

Manchester, CT 1994, Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, Inc., Book Two, 59–96; Anna Ritchie: *Prehistoric Orkney,* London 1995/1997, B.T. Batsford.

101 The “Sanctuary” is still recognizable by the post holes for the wooden columns.

102 The excavations and reconstructions were carried out by Alexander Keiller. See Aubrey Burl: *Prehistoric Avebury,* London 1979, Yale University Press, Chap. 3.

103 Mohen, 130–131.

104 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 206–208. –Near Stonehenge is Durrington Walls, an immense henge site of 500 m in diameter, surrounded by a high wall and wide ditch. With ground radar, archaeologists have now discovered 100 huge stones in the wall that once stood in the ring and are now buried. Large numbers of animal bones indicate that many people used to celebrate festivals here, while in the center of Stonehenge ash remains from numerous cremations were found. Therefore, the theory was set up that Stonehenge was a mortuary temple, while Durrington Walls served as a religious center for the living (note in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 9, 2015, No. 207, 14).

105 This wording in Schnurbein: *Atlas.*

106 On the subject of lines of sight and lines of cult (“ley-lines”) and Neolithic telecommunication: Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie*, Chap. 4 and 6.

107 It’s the Ellerbeck culture (Northwest Germany) and the Ertebølle culture (Denmark and South Sweden).

108 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 126–127.

109 Op. cit., 128, 131–133.

110 In North Germany they are called “long beds” or “giant’s beds.” Examples are: Modjes Küül and Merelmeershoog near Archsum (Sylt Island, North Sea); on the Baltic Sea: one at Karlsminde (60 m long), one on the Kronsteinberg at Großenbrode (97 m long), one on the Wienberg at Putlos (130 m long), one with mighty border stones at Nobbin on Rügen Island. The “Visbeker Braut” (Visbeke Bride) (80 m long) and the “Visbeker Bräutigam” (Visbeke Groom) (104 m long) are famous at Vechta in Lower Saxony. See Michael Schmidt: *Die alten Steine*, Rostock 1998, Hirnstorff Verlag; with beautiful photos in Johannes Groht: *Tempel der Ahnen*, Baden und Munich 2005, AT Verlag.

111 The richest is the burial ground of Sarnowo with nine trapezoidal long barrow tombs. Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 135.

112 The similarity between house building and burial structures was proven by Scottish megalithic graves. The rectangular house type with several departments corresponded to the oblong, elongated grave type subdivided by stone slabs (“stalled cairn”), while the roundish house type with square inner chamber (for ex. in Skara Brae) were represented in the round hill grave type with inner square chamber (“Maes Howe-type tomb”). See Ritchie, 44–45.

113 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 135, 137.

114 Example from Holland: the gallery grave of Bager. Examples from North Germany: the passage grave Denghoog (Sylt Island, North Sea); the passage grave of Bunsoh (with little cups on the capstone); the mighty chamber tomb (dolmen) Brutkampstein of Albersdorf; 12 dolmens in the Everstorf forest near Wismar; the dolmens of Lancken-Granitz and Nadelitz (Rügen Island, Baltic Sea). See Schmidt: *Die alten Steine*. Groht: *Tempel der Ahnen*.

115 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 138.

116 Ibid. –Examples are Voldbaek, Sarup, Toftum (all in Denmark) and Stävie (in Sweden).

117 In the Baltic area, it’s the Memel and Narva cultures. See Gimbutas: Op. cit., 141 f., 144 f., 152.

118 See the contemporary matriarchal societies portrayed in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Bennholdt-Thomsen: *Juchitán*, Barbara A. Mann: *Iroquoian Women*, and others.

119 Parzinger, 202, 209.

120 See the Dimini case study of Souvatzi: “Social Complexity” (closer still in Chapter 3 of the book in hand); the same applies to Sesklo, Achilleion, Nea Nikomedeia, and others. See Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 325–326.

121 Parzinger, 206.

122 Op. cit., 206, 207.

123 Similar houses, see for example, at the Cucuteni Tripolje Culture (Ukraine) and at the settlement Saint-Michel-du-Touch near Toulouse, 30 ha, with 300 houses (France); Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 104, 192. For settlement density see, for example, West Ukraine with 253 sites on 9000 sq km; Op. cit., 105.

124 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker*, 153.

125 Op. cit., 181.

126 Op. cit., 153.

127 Op. cit., 196.

128 Op. cit., 197.

129 This wording in Parzinger.

130 Op. cit., 139.

131 Eric Biermann: *Überlegungen zur Bevölkerungsgröße in Siedlungen der Bandkeramik*, Köln-Düren 2001, see http://www.rheinland-archäologie.de/biermann2000c.pdf

132 See this wording in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten*, 137.

133 Brigitte Röder: “Alles so schön vertraut hier,” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten*, 137–142.

134 This is based on a study of the strontium isotopes in the teeth of the dead.

135 Gronenborn and Strien, 34, 36–37.

136 See the intermarriage between two clans in matriarchal societies; Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 4.4, Chapter 8.2, 167–168.

137 This is the case with the matriarchal Trobriand Islanders Society in Melanesia; Op. cit., Chap.7.3.

138 Ibid.

139 See the detailed criticism of the applied methods of epigenetics, odontology, isotope analyses of strontium, carbon and hydrogen, and of the problematic statistics in Gabriele Uhlmann: *Archäologie und Macht*, Norderstedt 2012, Books on Demand, 121–196.

140 Lüning: “Bandkeramiker,” 183.

141 Both forms of residence are well known in matriarchal clans; See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies.*

142 Pieter van de Velde: “On Bandkeramik Social Structure,” in: *Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia* 12, Leiden, Holland 1979, University Press; Patricia Phillips: *The Middle Neolithic in Southern France: Chasséen Farming and Culture Process*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 142, Oxford 1982.

143 See the art of pottery in the matriarchal Berber women, whose practice was understood as magical, containing an ancient symbolism; it was only passed on among related women. Makilam: *Symbols and Magic*.

144 Helmut Schlichtherle: “Weibliche Symbolik auf Hauswänden und Keramikgefäßen: Spuren frauenzentrierter Kulte in der Jungsteinzeit?” in Brigitte Röder (ed.): *Ich Mann. Du*

Frau. Feste Rollen seit Urzeiten? Freiburg-Berlin 2014, Rombach Verlag, 114–117; Helmut Schlichtherle: “Kultbilder in den Pfahlbauten des Bodensees,” in: *Jungsteinzeit im Umbruch,* 266–277. –Schlichtherle is one of the few modern archaeologists who rely on their findings rather than ideology. His articles on the cult houses on Lake Constance are extremely interesting.

145 Such figures with halo also appear on rock carvings in Val Camonica (3rd millennium); a female stele of Sion (Valais, Switzerland, 3rd millennium.) also has a pronounced halo.

146 Female figures with their arms raised are often referred to as “adorants,” that is, as women who worship a higher, powerful being. But here it becomes clear that they themselves are the higher beings that give blessings. The so-called “adorants” attitude is therefore to be interpreted critically, as it is likely to be mostly women giving blessings.

147 Schlichtherle: “Weibliche Symbolik,” 131–132.

148 Op. cit., 122; see also the scholars mentioned there: Quitta 1957; Kaufmann 1969; Stöckl 2002; also Gimbutas: *Language,* 16–23. In archaeology it is called the “toad motif,” similarly to the “little bear” of Çatal Höyük in terms of the notorious denial of the birth process.

149 This wording in Schlichtherle: “Weibliche Symbolik,” 122.

150 Op. cit., 121. –Regarding the interpretation that the murals depict the genealogy from the primeval mother to the living, see Helmut Schlichtherle: “Mitten im Leben. Kulthäuser und Ahnenreihen,” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten,* 185. In this essay, he interprets the little triangles with the “M” symbol on their top as dancing figures, which is considerably less plausible than his first interpretation; see 183.

151 On rock drawings, for example in Val Camonica.

152 Schlichtherle: “Weibliche Symbolik,” 119.

153 Op. cit., 127.

154 Op. cit., 117–120, 126.

155 Wording of Irenäus Matuschik: “Totenhäuser und Ahnenkult,” in: *Steinzeit,* 51.

156 Goce Naumov: “Housing the Dead: Burials Inside the Houses and Vessels in the Neolithic Balkans,” in: *Cult in Context: Reconsidering Ritual in Archaeology,* eds. David A. Barrowclough and Caroline Malone, Oxford 2007, Oxbow Books, 255–257.

157 Even then, infants were still buried in the traditional way; see Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 331. As late as the 4th millennium, this was still in practice on the Orkney Islands, where two women were found who had been buried under a house of Skara Brae; see Ritchie, 61.

158 Naumov, 257–265. Gimbutas: *Language,* 191.

159 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 331.

160 There are two types of burial in megalithic structures: the burial of the deceased person in the clan grave or the secondary burial of the bones, after excarnation in individual stone box graves had taken place.

161 Mohen, 218.

162 See, for this point, an investigation of the Orkney Islands’ large, artistic tombs, which revealed that no elites were buried here, but all the people from the surrounding settlements, with an equal gender distribution. See David Fraser: *Land and Society in Neolithic Orkney 2,* British Archaeological Reports, British Series 356, Oxford 1983. See also the contemporary matriarchal Khasi people, who also built large dolmens and menhirs in such quantity that they cover entire valley floors. The Khasi society was egalitarian, and the megaliths were built by the individual clans. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies,* Chapter 2.4.

163 For example, the grave goods at the megalithic tomb of Aillevans (France); see Mohen, 128.
164 Gronenborn and Strien, 34.
165 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 336.
166 Finds from the burial ground of Aiterhofen-Ödmühle in Bavaria; Op. cit., 334, 336.
167 Mohen, 216.
168 Find from Franchthi (Peloponnese); see Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 331
169 Find of Aiterhofen-Ödmühle (Lower Bavaria); see Lüning: "Bandkeramiker," 189.
170 Finds of Brześć Kujawski (West Poland); see Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 334.
171 Find from Sarnowo (West Poland): Op. cit., 336–337. Probably there were more of these large women's graves, but this cannot be clearly determined because of the poor condition of the skeletons.
172 Finds of Krusza Zamkowa and of Aszód (West Poland); Op. cit., 335 and 334.
173 Grave No. 4 of Basatanya, Tiszapolgár Phase, and of Moragy-Tüzködomb and Zengövárkony (all in Hungary); Op. cit., 336 and 335.
174 Finds of Cernica and of Wychwatintsij (Romania); Op. cit., 336.
175 Ibid.
176 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies.*
177 See Chapter 5 of the book in hand.
178 Tombs of Nitra in Slovakia, photo in Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 282.
179 They were buried in a left-sided position regardless of gender, that is, on the woman's side. For the left side was considered that of the heart and the woman.
180 For example, in the dolmen of Kercado; in the dolmen of Mané-er-Hroëck; in the dolmen of L'Île Longue with halo; the final stone of the dolmen "Table des Marchands" shows this form overall; as well an entrance stone of a dolmen of Mané Kerioned, who additionally bulges sculpturally the belly with navel on his surface (casts in the Museum of Carnac).
181 Veronica Ions: *Egyptian Mythology,* London 1968, Paul Hamlyn.
182 Examples are: the Frau Holle pond on the Hoher Meissner; the children stones ("Chindli-Steine") in Switzerland; the swan stones on the Island of Rügen. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie.*
183 See further examples in Cristina Biaggi: "Temple-Tombs and Sculptures in the Shape of the Body of the Great Goddess," in: Joan Marler: *From the Realm,* 498–507.
184 Michael Dames: *The Silbury Treasure,* London 1976, Thames and Hudson, 52–58.
185 See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies,* Chapter 2.4 and 4.2.
186 Examples are: Tomnaverie recumbent stone circle; East Aquhorthies recumbent stone circle; Loanhead recumbent stone circle (all at Aberdeen, Grampian Region, Scotland).
187 Christoph Huth: "Erinnerungen in Stein," in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten,* 190. Max Dashu: "Grandmother Stones of Megalithic Europe," II and III, *Suppressed Histories Archives,* http://www.suppressedhistories.net
188 Schlichtherle: "Weibliche Symbolik," 129–130; Schlichterle: "Kultbilder in den Pfahlbauten," 275–277.
189 Examples are: Menhir 4 from Arco (Trentino, Italy) with breasts and rich jewelery; a stele from Lutry on Lake Geneva (Switzerland) and a stele from Latsch (Italy), both with breasts and crossed band; two steles from Sion (Wallis, Switzerland), both with crossed band; a stele with necklace, breasts and Y-strap from St. Sernin (Brittany); owl-faced stones from Spain and Portugal with breasts or U-shape as a lap; four menhirs from South France with breasts and hooks like sickles (Figs. in Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 239; Gimbutas: *Language,* 194).

190 Examples are: a stele from Sion with a dagger, another with a bow and arrow (Wallis/Switzerland); a menhir with dagger on the necklace (Rottenburg, Germany); a menhir with four axes (Tübingen, Germany); a stele with hammer, three axes and daggers (Latsch, Italy); Menhir one from Arco (Trentino, Italy) with seven daggers, four axes and more. These latter scarcely indicate the exaggerated equipment of "Big Men," instead the symbols on these steles might have been added successively, whenever a revered ancestor died.

191 See also the excellent analysis by Stella Souvatzi: "Land Tenure," in: *An Archaeology of Land Ownership,* 21–45.

192 Op. cit., 29–31.

193 In contemporary matriarchal societies, a sacred relationship with the landscape forms part of their culture; this is why they cannot and do not want to separate from their land. See, for example, the history of the Hopi in Arizona, as well as the history of the Iroquois with their sacred mounds in Ohio (both North America) and of the Khasi with their megalithic structures (Northeast India).

194 According to archaeological estimates, the partially destroyed graveyard once included 500 people, although now only 100 were found. Kurt Derungs: *Landschaften der Göttin,* Bern 2000, Edition Amalia, 11–16, 24–29.

195 Examples are: the "Paps D'Anu," meaning the "Breasts of Dana," near Killarney in Ireland; the "Paps of Jura," meaning the "Breasts of Jura," at Cnoc Seanndda in Scotland; the "Breasts of the Mother of God," the twin summits of the Osser mountain in Bavaria/Germany.

196 See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie,* 87–89.

197 Op. cit.; Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen.*

198 Avebury Henge also refers to the much older long barrow tomb of West Kennet which lies exactly in southern direction, too.

199 For example, the "White Lady," rock painting in the Tassili Mountains (Algeria), with huge horns.

200 Another interpretation of the bull or cow horn symbolism is as an anatomical analogy with the woman's birth organs: uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries, that is, the female fertile womb. See Dorothy Cameron: *Symbols of Birth and Death in the Neolithic Era*, London 1981, Kenyon-Deane.

201 For this interpretation and other presumed ceremonies, see Michael Dames: *The Avebury Cycle,* London 1977, 1996, Thames and Hudson.

202 One of these round buildings is the "Sanctuary," which could be reconstructed from the post holes, while the other round building has been lost. The "Sanctuary" was built with several rings of wooden pillars, not of stone, and had a conical roof. The contemporaneous, archaeologically well-researched round building of Durrington Walls (South England) served as a comparison.

203 See the principle of balance in the worldview of contemporary matriarchal peoples, exemplary in the traditional culture of the Iroquois. Barbara Alice Mann: *Spirits of Blood, Spirits of Breath. The Twinned Cosmos of Indigenous America,* New York 2016, Oxford University Press.

204 On the phenomenon of landscape temples and how to find them, see two examples of Goettner-Abendroth: the Dreisamtal in the Black Forest (South Germany), in: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie,* Chap. 4, and the Oberhalbsteiner Tal/Surses (East Switzerland), in: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen*, Chap. 3.

205 Dames: *The Avebury Cycle,* 185–218.

206 Figurines are missing from the late LBK and other regional cultures, but this cannot be ascertained in any absolute way, because they might have been made of perishable materials.

207 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 223. –The Lithuanian-American archaeologist, Marija Gimbutas: carried out five important excavations in Southeast Europe which yielded numerous figurine finds. Moreover, she examined thousands of figurines, which have since slumbered unnoticed and misunderstood in museums and magazines.

208 See, for example, Lüning for the female figures of the early LBK.

209 See the criticism of this approach in Annine van der Meer: *The Language of MA, the Primal Mother*, printed in Holland 2015, self-published, 46, 214–217.

210 In English-speaking countries they are called "dirty dolls."

211 Peter J. Ucko: "The Interpretation of Prehistoric Anthropomorphic Figurines," *The Journal of the Royal Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1962, Vol. 92, 38–45.

212 For different kinds of poses and postures of the figurines, presented as a typology, see Annine van der Meer: *The Language of MA*.

213 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker*, 149–152, 272–273.

214 This wording and the wrong illustration included in Lüning: "Bandkeramiker," 178, 276.

215 Illustrations of such figurine groups from the Cucuteni culture (Southeast Europe) and from the area of the Moldau (Central Europe) in Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 228, 261.

216 On celebrations of life stages in the hands of women see: the Mosuo (Southwest China), the Kuna (Panama) and others, in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 5.2, 12.2.

217 Examples are: "Bundo Kanduang," the deified ancestral mother of the Minangkabau in Sumatra; "Ka Meikha," the mythical primeval mother of all Khasi in Northeast India; the "kLu mo" of the Tibetans, ancient mother goddesses who play a role in ancestor worship; the "Matrikas" in Nepal, who include the oldest, rural version of the goddess Kali; the "Ammas" in South India, clan and village goddesses of the indigenous Parayan in Kerala, for whom megalithic stones were erected, as with the Khasi. See on Sumatra Peggy R. Sanday: *Women at the Center. Life in a Modern Matriarchy*, Ithaca, New York 2002, Cornell University Press; see on the others Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 2.4 (on Northeast India), 4.2 (on Tibet), 3.2 (on Nepal), 15.3, 340–341 (on South India).

218 This patriarchal-religious claim to exclusivity may be the reason for the misunderstanding, which is why ealier archaeologists introduced the idea of the one Great Mother goddess of the Neolithic, and why this idea is rejected today because of the same misunderstanding.

219 See "Moon Mother Amana" (Arawak, South America) and "Our Grandmother Moon" (Iroquois, North America) in: Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, 220–221, 318–320; see the sun goddesses of East Asia Op. cit., 150–152 ("Amaterasu" in Japan), the same with the Khasi (Northeast India) and Miao (South China).

220 For example, an abstract female figure as bull head with stars (Egypt); a clay bull with triangle on its head and crescent moon on the flanks (Phaistos, Minoan culture, Crete); Apis Bull with triangle on the forehead, full moon on the head and crescent moon on the flanks (Saïtic epoch, Egypt).

221 Linked with the Cretan double ax was the symbol of the butterfly, both codes for the transformation from death to rebirth. Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 247, 268–269; Gimbutas: *Laguage*, 273.

222 An example of the solar spiral is the Triskel in the New Grange tomb (Ireland); two examples out of thousands for concentric circles of this kind are the rocks of Carschenna

(East Switzerland) and Loughcrew (Ireland).

223 Gimbutas: *Language,* 58–60.

224 Ibid.

225 It becomes clear from this Neolithic symbolism that the symbol of the sun did not first appear with the Indo-Europeans, but already belonged to the long-established, pre-Indo-European cultures.

226 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 206–220.

227 Open air exhibition at Heppenheim am Odenwald (Hesse/Germany)

228 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 206.

229 Op. cit., 208. Truely grotesque are the individual "fashion" examples of this exhibition: 1. Woman in a "gown with a pointed neckline"–however, the corresponding figure has three V-shaped signs on the neck and more signs on the back (see Fig. 25 b of Chapter 4); 2. Woman with "curly hair on the back of the head"–but the small original has a bird's head and is not a realistic image, which does not match the interpretation of "little curly head"; 3. Man with "round hat"–however, the original figure has symbols on his back and even on the "hat"; 4. Man with a big, female pubic triangle on his lower body–the Neolithic figure is not male at all, because men do not have a female lap triangle! See the illustrations in Lüning: Op. Cit., Fig. 35/36 (figurine from western Hungary); Fig. 51 (figurine from Slovakia); other so-called "little curly-head" figures from Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse and Hungary despite the bird's heads of them (Fig. 378, 384/385, 386); Fig. 415 (figure from the Czech Republic), Fig. 464 (figure from Thuringia). See also Lüning: "Bandkeramiker," 185–189.

230 Lüning: *Die Bandkeramiker,* 220.

231 Gimbutas: *Language*. Here a detailed symbol analysis is given. The "fashionable" trivializing of the significance of the figurines is directed against this interpretation of Gimbutas.

232 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* Chap. 8. Joan Marler (ed.): *The Danube Script. Neo-Eneolithic Writing in Southeastern Europe,* Sibiu, Romania and Sebastopol, USA 2008, Brukenthal National Museum and Institute of Archaeomythology. Joan Marler and Miriam Robbins Dexter (eds.): *Signs of Civilization. Neolithic Symbol System of Southeast Europe,* Novi Sad Branch, Serbia 2009, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and Institute of Archaeomythology, USA.

233 See find of Jerf el-Ahmar, PPNA, 10th millenium, in: *Die ältesten Monumente.*

234 Interpretation of Gimbutas: *Language,* 111, and Chapters 1–4, 9, 12–15, 19; Gimbutas: *Civilization,* Chapter 7.

235 Gimbutas: *Language,* Chap. 19. –The figure of the "Rigid Naked" is described by Gimbutas as "White Goddess of Death," an interpretation that we do not follow. Firstly, these figures are by no means always white and slim, some of them are of voluptuous body and colorfully painted (heterogeneous group); secondly, the "White Lady" of Central and North European mythology is the Mist and Winter Lady, while the Death Goddess was depicted as the Black Goddess. This critical review was published in the magazine *MatriaVal,* No. 6, Frankfurt 2010.

236 Figurines with such characteristics are richly documented in Gimbutas: *Language.*

237 Christian missionaries have slandered this indigenous and ancient view of the divine as "animism."

238 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies,* Chapters 5.5 (China), 6.3 (Korea), 7.1 (Japan).

239 The color white belongs to her, as the youthful renewer of light and life, and not to the goddess of death (as Gimbutas assumed, see commentary in footnote 598 of the book in hand). All these goddesses are pre-Celtic, pre-Greek and pre-Roman, but only these cultures recorded their names in writing.

240 This aspect does not show her as the Black Goddess, because the color of the earth is not always black, but changes from place to place. Also, it is not understandable that fertility and vitality should be black (as Gimbutas explains here).

241 In this aspect she is the Black Goddess. Already in Çatal Höyük the vulture goddess was black (see Chapter 3, Fig. 2 of the book in hand), so this color for the goddess of death is ancient. Earth goddesses, however, can be confused with goddesses of the Underworld, as the womb of the earth was also considered dark. To attribute the color black to the goddess of death only to the later Indo-Europeanization of Europe (as Gimbutas does here) is not proven and purely schematic. The problem in Gimbutas arises when she wrongly interprets the goddess of death as "white" (see commentary in footnote 598 of the book in hand). The symbolic color of the goddesses, however, did not change during the long period of their worship, even in Indo-European times.

242 Fall and winter were considered to be just one season in the warm, southern European countries.

243 I have shown the aspects and figures of the Triple Goddess as well as her functions and diverse attributes through an analysis of later-written myths, particularly in the light of their symbolism, which shows an astounding continuity since the Neolithic epoch. My analysis includes the vast cultural regions of India, West Asia, the Mediterranean, and Europe. Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros*, Part I. This analysis was first published in 1980 (in English, 1989), independently of Gimbutas' later interpretation of Neolithic figurines.

5

Bronze Age in the Eurasian Steppe: The Origins of Early Patriarchal Societies and Female Resistance

In the Bronze Age, the development in the Eurasian Steppe led to considerable upheavals in West Asia. The changes in steppe societies had already begun in the Neolithic Age and became noticeable in the neighboring cultures. In Asia Minor, with its very ancient matriarchal history, a special situation evolved which we want to examine more closely. For this is where female resistance against the early patriarchy was formed by the appearance of the Amazons.

5.1 Societies of the Eurasian Steppe: The Rise of Nomadism and Early Domination

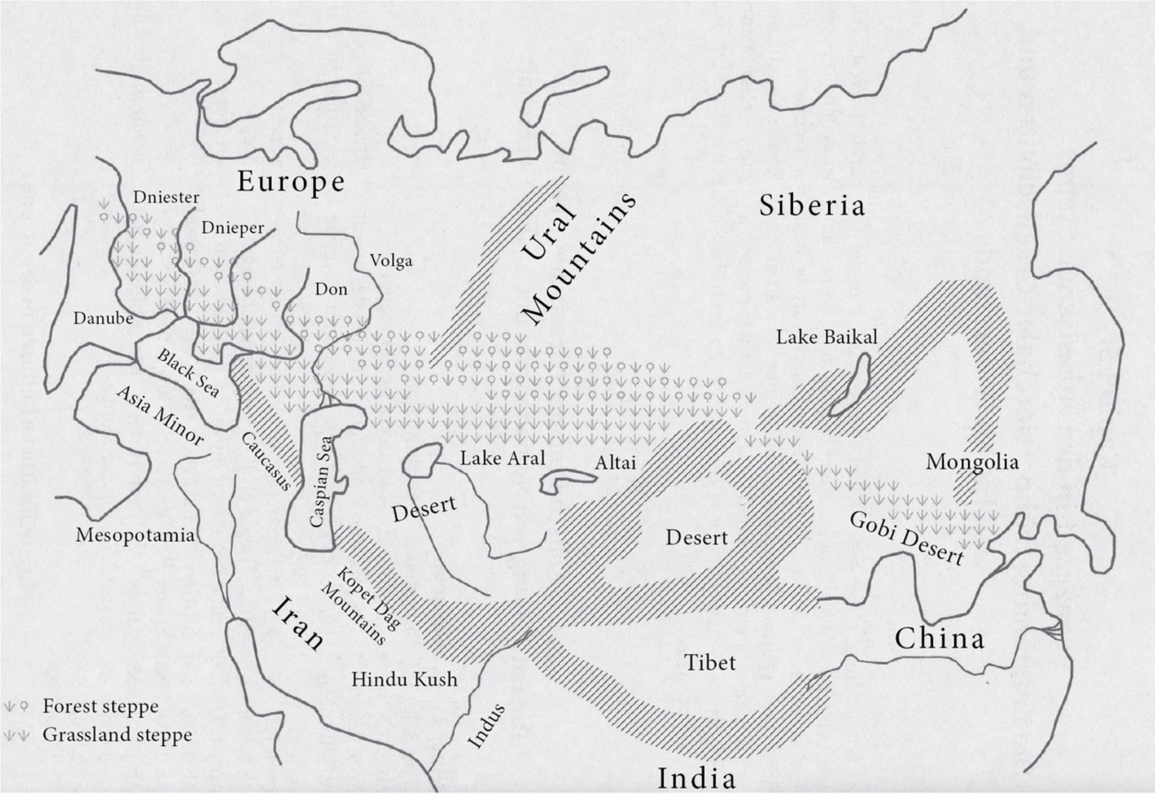
Chronology of the Steppe Cultures

7th to 5th millennium:	Neolithic
From 6th millennium:	Increasing drought on the Steppe
From 5th millennium:	Herder cultures with domestication of the horse in the Ural Mountains
From mid-5th millennium:	Herder-warrior cultures in the whole Steppe area (Early Indo-Europeans)
In the 4th millennium:	Copper Stone Age in the western part of the Eurasian Steppe
From 3,400:	Herder warriors as semi-nomads with wagons in the Steppe
Around 3,400–3,200:	Early Bronze Age in the western part of the Eurasian Steppe
Around 2,800–2,600:	Middle Bronze Age, herder warriors as nomads
Around 2,200–2,000:	Late Bronze Age, invention of the chariot
Around 1,900–1,800:	Expansion of herder-warrior cultures with chariots over the whole of the Eurasian Steppe

←247 | 248→

Neolithic Cultures in the Steppe

The Eurasian Steppe is made up of a broad belt of open grasslands bordered in the north by the vast forests of Siberia and North Europe and in the south by the endless mountain ranges of West and Central Asia. It stretches over thousands of kilometers from Ukraine and South Russia over the Kazakh Steppe to Mongolia and North China. It is bordered by two transition zones: at its northern rim the forest steppe with its light tree density, a positive supplement to the grassland steppe, and at its southern rim the much more hostile deserts that extend between the mountain ranges and the Steppe (Map 4).


Europe
Siberia
Dniester
Dnieper
Volga
Don
Danube
Ural Mountains
Lake Baikal
Black Sea
Asia Minor
Caucasus
Caspian Sea
Lake Aral
Altai
Mongolia
Desert
Desert
Gobi Desert
Mesopotamia
Kopet Dag Mountains
Iran
China
Tibet
Hindu Kush
Indus
India
Forest steppe
Grassland steppe

Map 4: The Steppe belt of Eurasia

This grassland belt has been called the “Steppe Highway,”[1] because in later epochs the equestrian peoples of the Steppe used it to transport goods for long-distance trade between the East and the West, to establish a series of vast empires, and to invade China and Europe from time to time. It offered a route that, for millennia, was considerably faster than the long and troublesome sea route from Europe to East Asia, which was only opened up in historically recent times. The openness of the grasslands was an advantage for these peoples, even though they were exposed to an extreme continental climate with icy cold winters and blazing summers.

←248 | 249→The sensitivity of the Steppe to climate fluctuations had a drastic effect in early history, because there have been frequent changes, in the last 5,000 years, between warm, humid periods and cold, dry phases.

The increasing drought, which could not be stopped even by the more humid intermediate periods, had ←249 | 250→considerable socio-economic consequences. It was most precarious for the people inhabiting the grassland steppe, representing a major challenge.[2] Such climate fluctuations are least noticeable in the extensive forest area of Siberia, the “taiga,” since the forest can regulate its water balance and keep it stable. Here the challenge posed by the climate for humans was much smaller, and they were able to continue with their Mesolithic hunting and gathering economy, enriched by fishing, until the modern age, while the conditions in the steppe changed dramatically.

Before the Eurasian Steppe belt began to dry out inexorably in the 6th millennium, it was much wetter in the warm period of the Early Neolithic. Under these favorable conditions, the neolithization of the Steppe developed, and a wealth of cultures emerged that derived from or were influenced by the southern and western matriarchal cultures in processes of migration or acculturation. They possessed the Neolithic economy with permanent settlements, domestic animal husbandry and more or less agriculture.

Several such cultures originated from the middle of the 7th millennium in the West Asian steppes, especially at the northern rim of the Kopet Dag mountain range in South Turkmenistan, where small watercourses came down from the mountains (see Map 4 for all the regions mentioned here). These cultures originated from Neolithic settlements in the Iranian highlands, which in turn developed from the cultures of the Fertile Crescent.[3] They had large populations and big tell-settlements with temples, indicating their long-lasting sedentary lifestyle. In that way, they displayed the same hallmarks as the highly developed, matriarchal cultures of the Fertile Crescent.[4]

They had a Neolithic influence on the northern neighboring cultures, which still followed the Mesolithic way of life. Through the process of acculturation, a culture developed in the West Asian Steppe around the Aral Sea to the eastern Caspian Sea, uniting the characteristics of both cultural epochs. The economy consisted predominantly of hunting, as well as breeding domestic animals and some cereal cultivation.[5] Its settlements were located along rivers and lakes, and large rectangular houses indicate life organized around clans. The grave finds show that the social order was egalitarian—also indicating a matriarchal clan society. ←250 | 251→The circumstances are similar in the East European Steppe, which extends from the north of the Caucasus (South Russia) and north of the Black Sea (Ukraine). A culture flourished north of the Caucasus as far as the Volga estuary into the Caspian Sea, influenced by the Neolithic cultures in the South Caucasus, which in turn originated from the matriarchal cultures of southeastern Anatolia.[6]

Cultures followed to the west, which were not influenced by the old, cultural regions of the Fertile Crescent, but by the western, younger Danube cultures in the Balkans. Thus, two cultures flourished at the mouth of the Don (Sea of Azov),[7] and the Bug-Dniester culture (7th-5th millennium) developed between the estuaries of the two rivers Bug and Dniester where they flow into the Black Sea. They were in contact with the matriarchal cultures of Southeast Europe, from which they adopted the Neolithic way of life.[8] North of this, from the Dnieper to the Don, the Dnieper-Donets culture (mid 6th millennium) occupied a large area in the grassland and forest steppes, where people settled at the watercourses. Influenced by its Southeast European neighbors, this culture also changed to a Neolithic economy. As in all these cultures, the community graves indicate an egalitarian social order.[9] Nevertheless, the certain separation of these cultures from the cultures of Danube persisted, indicating ethnic and linguistic differences.

In this way, Neolithic cultures also flourished in the steppes, covering an extensive zone north of the mountain ranges and Black Sea. Like their southern and western urban neighbors, from which they originated or were influenced, they had the egalitarian, matriarchal social order of that time. Patriarchal patterns were nowhere to be found; they still had to develop due to certain circumstances. Animal breeding played a particular role in this, finally arriving from the Neolithic cultures of the Fertile Crescent into the north-eastern steppe cultures, until it was also adopted in the steppe around the Ural Mountains in the 5th millennium.[10]

←251 | 252→

New Economy: Herds and Horses

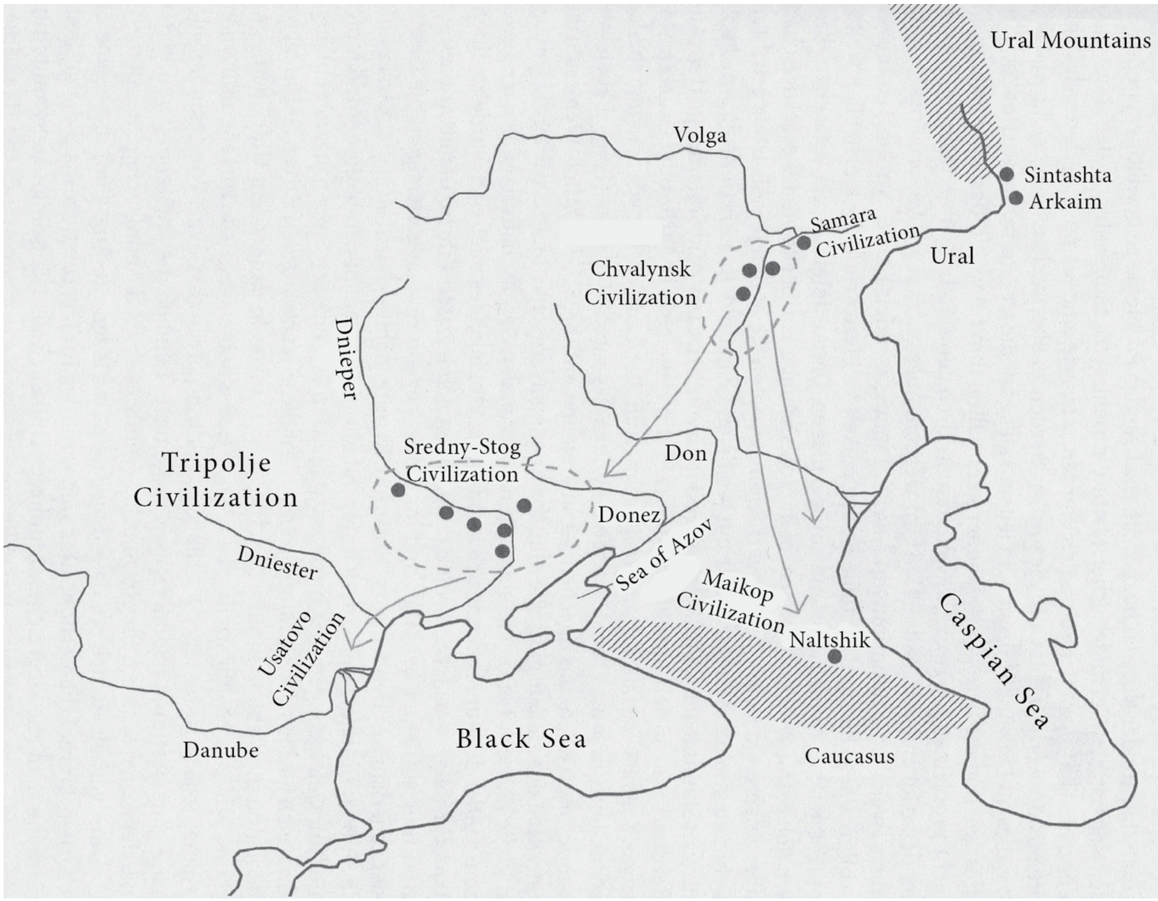
From the 6th millennium onwards, the favorable period in the Eurasian Steppe came to an end for the first time due to rapid desiccation, which had a drastic effect on the grassland steppe and a somewhat slower effect on the forest steppe. The Neolithic peoples with permanent settlements in these zones came under pressure, the ground became increasingly barren, rivers dried up, and lakes shrank or disappeared entirely, leaving behind salty, cracked areas. We don’t know how many settlement communities perished in the process. Others responded to this lingering catastrophe in a variety of ways, but only those finding new solutions managed to survive and continued the history. The result was far-reaching change from mid-5th millennium onwards, bringing about a complete revolution in economic and social conditions.

One initial response was the intensification of hunting (“secondary hunters”). This, however, had its limits, because the diversity of species of large animals observed in the Palaeolithic period no longer existed. They therefore followed the vast herds of wild horses that roamed the Eurasian Steppe.[11] Humans had been hunting wild horses since the Palaeolithic period, and they knew how these animals behaved. A second response was to transform small groups of domestic animals into large herds of sheep, goats and cattle in order to secure food supplies. However, keeping large numbers of animals required increased mobility because they could no longer be herded on foot. In addition, extensive migrations had to be undertaken to find new pastures for the many animals. Therefore, a third response was the domestication of the wild horse, which began in the 5th millennium in the area of the Urals.

A halter and snaffle are needed to tame and direct horses, with snaffles leaving traces on the horses’ teeth. The place where horses were first domesticated had long been controversial in research, until—in the populous Botai culture east of the Urals—horse teeth were found in addition to hundreds of thousands of horse bones, these teeth demonstrating slight wear by soft snaffles made of rope or leather.[12] The large number of horse bones here does not come from wild horses, but from tamed horses, guaranteeing a supply of meat. For horses are easier to keep in winter than sheep and goats; they feed themselves with grass by scratching away the snow cover, while sheep and goats have to be fed by humans.[13] But ←252 | 253→even herds of tame horses cannot be looked after on foot, thus the discovery of the horse as an animal for riding was almost inevitable. Now all animals could be herded on horseback, resulting again in a massive increase of the herds, so that livestock breeding in the West Asian steppe (Kazakhstan) boomed.[14] With this change of economy, the people were not aware, however, that the growing herds of sheep and goats caused even more damage to the already arid land and aggravated desertification.

The two spheres of work of hunting and grazing large herds have always been the domain of men. On the other hand, the already small amount of agriculture, the domain of women, continued to shrink. Although the settlements had been built along watercourses, plant growing could not thrive as many smaller rivers dried up. The balance between the sexes shifted to the detriment of women, who became increasingly dependent on the food provided by men. A *male-dominated herding culture* developed, but not yet a nomadic culture since the people remained tied to their settlements. Migration with the herds was seasonal: in the summer months they moved to far-off pastures or high-lying mountain meadows, but in winter they stayed close to the villages. People were tied to their location to a certain extent, even though the sites were often relocated. Archaeologists have found almost no traces of the houses from that time, which indicates a light and mobile type of architecture. The only fixed places for people were the burial sites as the places of their ancestors, which they visited repeatedly.[15]

Horse-dependent herding cultures also developed west of the Ural Mountains. Here small horse sculptures and horse bones have been found at sacrificial sites, showing that the horse had now been given a religious significance (culture of Samara on the Volga Loop, 6th/5th millennium).[16] A subsequent culture developed in the middle region of the Volga, with horse sacrifices appearing on men's graves, which also had a ritual significance (Chvalynsk, 4,700–3,800) (Map 5). It was here that the symbols of power of the new, male-dominated herding culture first appeared: long flint daggers, stone axes and stone clubs, which were shaped like horse heads, thus they were called "horse head scepters" (Fig. 1). These have been found in individual graves of adult men who had been buried in pits under a flat stone tumulus (Russian: "Kurgan").[17]


Ural Mountains
Volga
Sintashta
Arkaim
Samara Civilization
Ural
Chvalynsk Civilization
Dnieper
Don
Sredny-Stog Civilization
Tripolje Civilization
Donez
Dniester
Sea of Azov
Maikop Civilization
Naltshik
Caspian Sea
Usatovo Civilization
Danube
Black Sea
Caucasus

Map 5: The spreading of the Indo-Europeans to the South and Southwest

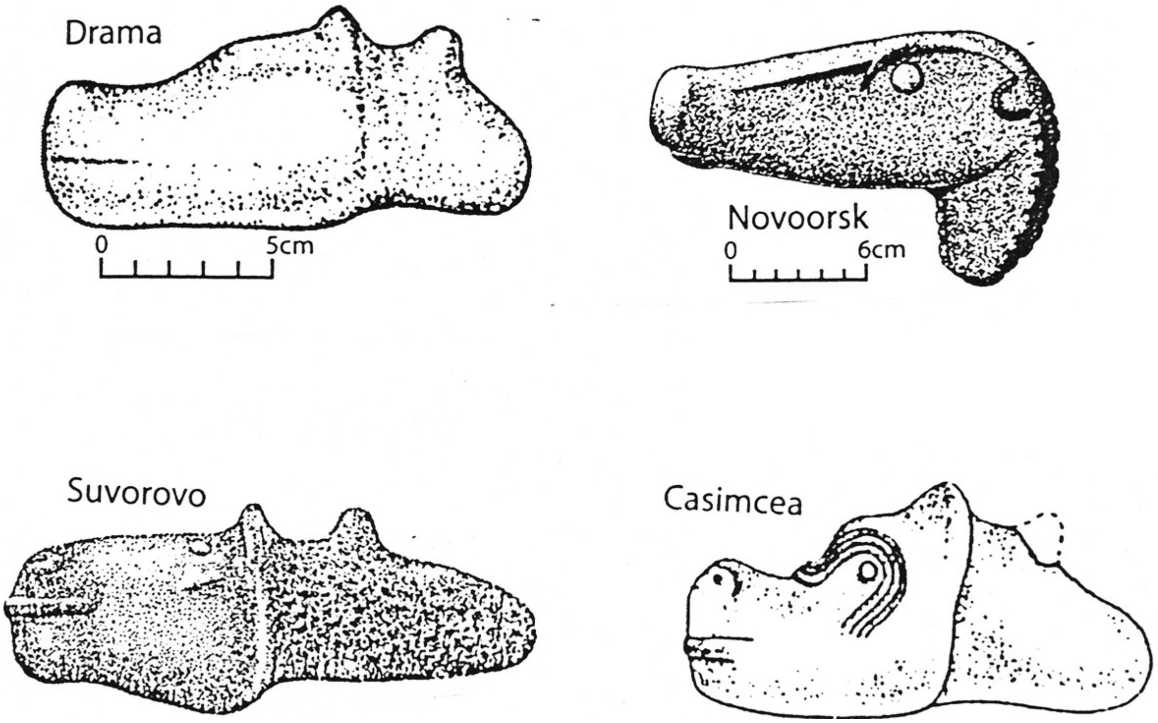


Fig. 1: Horse heads at the point of clubs, so-called “horse head scepters,” Volga (Russia)

←253 | 254→ ←254 | 255→We can thus see that the pattern which has been projected onto Neolithic farming communities thousands of years too early actually began here: the first *hierarchization* of society under male leadership. As this is a completely new social pattern, the question must be answered regarding how it happened. In no way it is easy to enforce hierarchization in the midst of a basically egalitarian society. At first this did not come about deliberately, but resulted from the need to cope with the growing problems. In times of need, an inventive man might have found the right solutions, for example riding on the quick horses, or how a group of men on horseback must be organized to watch over the growing herds. It is not important to know how this happened in detail. In any case, this man as a “rescuer from distress” gained great prestige, being voluntarily obeyed by the other men. In principle this would not have been problematic, because in matriarchal societies, men who achieve something special are certainly recognized. But, in addition, there was another development that aggravated the situation. The growing herds demanded ever larger pastures, and the new mobility on horseback enabled men to cover considerably longer distances for good grassland. This, however, led to a *first phase of conflicts:* as more and more tribes began to change to mounted grazing and thus were expanding, they clashed with each other over the areas they wished to claim, leading to disputes over grazing land. There were fights that, at this stage, consisted of feuds between clans and tribes. Also, cattle and horse theft began, perhaps for revenge or other motives. Such attacks could be carried ←255 | 256→out very quickly on horseback, retreating just as rapidly, but they resulted in like for like counter-attacks. With this feuding the reputation of the victorious leaders grew considerably.

If the situation had been defused by new favorable climatic conditions, the feuds and male leadership—as is usual in matriarchal societies—would have been short.[18] But the increasing loss of good pasture land remained and became a permanent problem, resulting in constant feuding. Now the leaders were continuously needed, and their status began to consolidate: the figure of the "charismatic leader" evolved, simultaneously undermining the traditional matriarchal clan order. In order to be victorious in any situation, the leaders and their retinue of fighting men formed their own groups and alliances beyond the cohesion of the clans and also beyond tribal boundaries. In this way herders became *herder warriors,* and the areas within their reach sank into constant strife.

At this point it is very important to note that not every herding culture, not even every herding warrior culture, is automatically patriarchal.[19] Here we describe a very specific development, namely the emergence of the first patriarchal patterns for a very specific area: the Eurasian Steppe.

As it happens, constant strife considerably increases the fear for one's own safety. This might have been the underlying reason why the communities finally recognized the victorious leaders as chieftains and voluntarily granted them a certain power for their merits. The chieftain system went against the old egalitarian way of life, but since these "charismatic leaders" had, in the meantime, gathered a group of armed followers around them, they were able to override certain rules of the traditional internal order. Their armed retinue represented the first “staff of enforcement,” the definite, necessary criterion for domination, which now began in tendency.[20] The staff of enforcement was now used to gradually convert livestock, previously owned by the community, into private property.[21] The chief increasingly compensated himself for his merits by owning livestock, the others ←256 | 257→being unable or unwilling to do anything about it. Unlike land or arable crops, cattle can be counted and also multiplied at will, providing the owner has the necessary skill in raising it. In this way the chief soon possessed a large part of the herd, appropriated as personal, mobile property. In order to appease the community, he would donate several animals everyone to eat at festivities: this is how the “feasts of merit” of the wealthy chiefs originated, affording them even more honor.

Since the economy was based one-sidedly on livestock breeding, private ownership of cattle resulted in a significant shift of power in favor of the chief, enabling him to enlarge his retinue and strengthen the alliance between him as leader and his brothers in arms by giving away cattle. This relationship was sealed by oaths, thus legalizing inequality also between men for the first time, because not all men were included in the brotherhood of arms.[22] This process shows that it was not private property that triggered the emergence of domination—for it would be necessary to explain how private property could appear in a communal economy! It is the other way around: the first tendencies towards domination, arising from permanent armed conflicts, led to staffs of enforcement and to private property, which is then used to consolidate such dominance.[23]

A “charismatic leader” was important not only for the feuds that flared up at any given time, but also for the constantly changing alliances, which promised safety. Each new alliance was celebrated with feasts, with the newly allied chieftains competing to display their wealth—which probably filled their respective communities with pride. Finally, they reaffirmed their status by giving valuable gifts to each other. At this time the gifts consisted of prestigious goods such as flint daggers, bracelets made of precious stones, shell jewelry, chains made of animal teeth, and also of copper and gold in the Copper Stone Age—all this has been found by archaeologists in the Kurgan male tombs. Copper was particularly regarded as “exotic” and highly valued, because at that time they didn’t produce the metal themselves but obtained it from the centers of copper processing of Southeast Europe.[24]

Such luxury goods as symbols of prestige spurred individual ambition, and so interest to own them grew. A new greed for possession stirred, and the chiefs began to control the west-east transport routes by force of arms in order to monopolize the coveted copper. In this way, what we call “trade” was created, which is closely related to strife. Right from the start, trade appeared here as long-distance trade for individual interests. As a consequence, the power of the chiefs soon extended far beyond the local cultures west of the Urals. The archaeological evidence for this is the spread of Kurgan burial customs and the typical horse-head clubs in the Chvalynsk style, appearing at the northern edge of the Caucasus (near Nalchik) as well as the Sea of Azov up to West Ukraine (Sredni Stog culture).[25] The similarity of such finds in places thousands of kilometers apart reveals the extraordinary mobility of these herder warriors from the Urals and the far-reaching contacts of their chiefs, be they peaceful or violent. From 4,500 they dominated the entire eastern European steppe region from the Urals to the Caucasus and Ukraine (see Map 5).

What happened to the previous Neolithic cultures of matriarchal character that lived in the same vast area? They were “overlapped”—as it is described by archaeologists, succinctly and disparagingly. To be more precise, a *second phase of conflicts* now emerged, and these conflicts were different from the feuds between clans and tribes. As an example of this situation, which also occurred to many others, the fate of the Dnieper-Donets culture should be mentioned here, which was “overlapped” by the culture of Sredni Stog (4,400–3,400). The settlements of the Sredni Stog culture were located on the lower reaches of the Dnieper and Dniester, precisely in the area of the older Dnieper-Donets culture (see Map 5). Here Kurgan graves have also been discovered with individual burials of men, associated with horse and dog sacrifices, and grave goods such as stone axes and horsehead clubs, long flint stone daggers, thousands of shell beads and small copper and gold artifacts.[26] These Kurgan burials were located in the cemeteries of the previous culture, displacing the custom of community graves. The newcomers were a different people to the indigenous inhabitants, as shown by their skull and bone shape which was different to that of the Dnieper-Donets people; they were larger and slimmer and resembled the people of the Chvalynsk culture (Fig. 2).[27] Additionally, in the settlements, the layer of grey, primitive Sredni Stog pottery lay above the layer of skillful, painted pottery from the Dnieper-Donets culture.[28] This proves that groups of people from the Volga had invaded the area of the Dnieper-Donets culture on the Black Sea and had pushed away the older culture through violence. They came on horseback, since jaw pieces made from antlers to support a snaffle have been found.[29] The amount of bone from domesticated horses shows that horsemeat was their main food.[30]

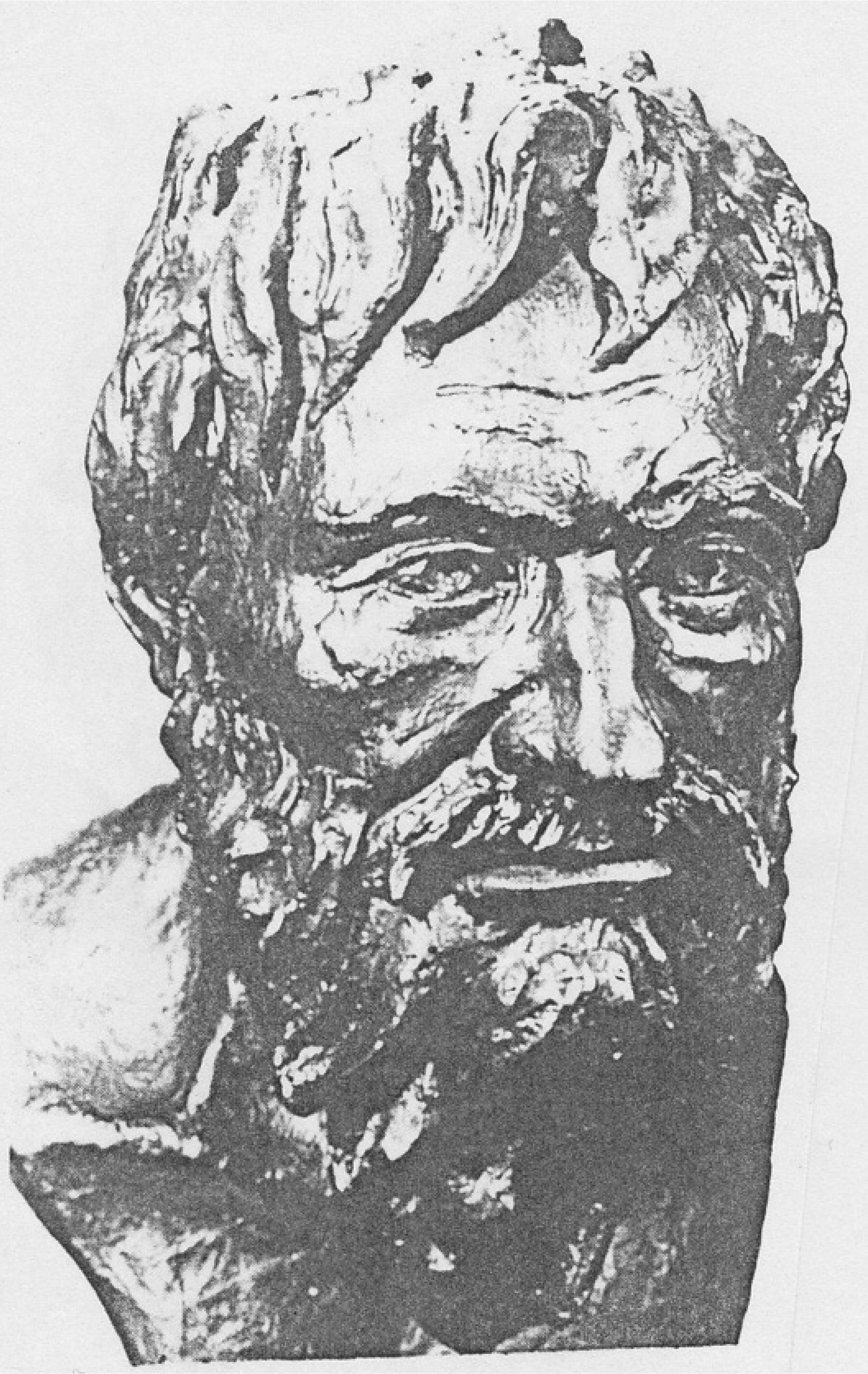


Fig. 2: Reconstruction of a chieftain's head of Sredni Stog, Early Indo-European type

Such drastic changes were certainly not voluntarily accepted by the natives, and the so-called "overlapping" did not take place peacefully. The invaders came in loose groups of mounted, battle-hardened herder warriors—a new, terrifying appearance for the old-established residents.[31] Those who survived the attack probably fled to the neighboring matriarchal Tripolje culture in Ukraine. This second phase of conflict is therefore characterized by patriarchal warrior groups clashing with cultures of matriarchal character in the steppe, ending with violent land seizure and expulsion. However, this is not a planned, organized war, but rather the accidental by-product of raids by the expanding herder warrior peoples. Nevertheless, this new pattern of land seizure and expulsion of the people of older cultures continued and had far-reaching effects.

The extensive and magnificent Tripolje culture in Ukraine was spared by this first wave of expansion from the steppe because it knew how to protect itself. Its last extension to the Dnieper (4,700–4,500) brought it into conflictive contact with the herder warriors, as evidenced by finds of arrowheads and slingshot stones at settlements in the border zone.[32] As a result, the farmers on the border built their settlements on steep hills and fortified them.[33] This defense was enough for the first wave of patriarchal warrior groups to avoid the Tripolje culture and to bypass it in the south, along the coast of the Black Sea, in the direction of the Danube (see Map 5). But the subsequent disintegration of other matriarchal cultures was soon felt here as well, as an even larger number of refugees flocked into the Tripolje culture. In just one century its settlement density saw a massive increase, the number of settlements growing almost tenfold from 35 to 340.[34] The Tripolje cities also grew enormously, and three of them, adjacent to each other, covered between 250 and 450 hectares. Their often two-storey longhouses of 20–30 m housed a population of up to 10,000 people at that time.[35] The houses were joined together in concentric circles, with the largest outside forming a kind of protective enclosure. Internally they were grouped into clan segments, for despite the external threat, egalitarian political self-government based on clan councils continued.

At times there were also peaceful contacts with the herder warriors from the steppe, as they were introduced to the red gleaming copper by the Tripolje people, arousing their greediness.[36] Thus they traded instead of fighting, and objects such as collars made of copper beads and long copper needles were acquired as jewelry and symbols of prestige in an exchange of goods, traveling from the Dnieper to the Volga.[37] Copper objects also appeared north of the Caucasus and at the Caspian Sea, but they had arrived there from the south.[38] But simple importation did not last long; inspired by the West, the steppe peoples soon began to mine copper in the Ural Mountains, and experimented with processing it themselves (4th millennium).[39] This was the beginning of the Copper Stone Age in the western part of the Eurasian Steppe.

Who were these peoples around the West Urals who organized themselves in a new way as herder warriors penetrating far into the steppes? This question was answered by linguistics, clearly identifying the people of Samara, Chvalynsk and Sredni Stog as early Indo-Europeans.[40] They spoke early Indo-European in the period of 4,500–2,500.[41] This has been deduced from early Indo-European words that describe the ecology of the steppe and the cattle-breeding economy of these peoples. The early Indo-European language expanded more and more with the far-reaching raids of these herder warriors.

Always on the Move: Wagons and Tents

The cold period in the steppe around 4,200–4,100 was followed by a warmer phase during the Copper Stone Age. This epoch witnessed one of the most seminal inventions: the wheel and wagon. Where wagons first were built is not known. In the middle of the 4th millennium, they were suddenly present both among the steppe peoples and also the Neolithic peoples of Europe, in a wide range of cultures with a woodworking tradition. Archaeological evidence of this abounds as from 3,400 onwards: in the form of rock carvings of wagons with wheels, as three-dimensional wagon models and also wooden wheels and parts of wagons.[42] There were uniaxial barrows and biaxial wagons that ran on wooden disc wheels.[43] In Europe, the wetlands of the pile dwelling settlements played an archaeologically beneficial role, as wooden wheels and wagons have only been found there, preserved in peat-moss for thousands of years. Even well-preserved plank paths for the wagons have been excavated there.[44] It is probable that these wagons originated from the much older oxen-drawn sleighs, which in summer were moved on rollers. In the steppes, spectacular finds have been made ←261 | 262→ in “wagon graves,” where numerous fragments of barrows and wagons have been discovered among the skeletons in kurgan graves. The oldest date from 3,300, these also ran on wooden disc wheels.[45]

The speed with which this new form of transport spread indicates the intense east-west contacts that existed during the Copper Stone Age. However, the use of wagons in Neolithic Europe was quite different from that in the steppes. In the agricultural societies of Europe, barrows and wagons helped to transport loads such as crops, animal feed and firewood, as well as stones for houses and grave structures. Although the wagons were slow and the teams of oxen heavy, with only a few people it was now possible to manage what had previously only been possible as a community. This means that their use was peaceful and their radius remained narrow due to the hilly, and in many areas compact landscape of Europe, which was not suitable as a race-course for fast-moving wagons.

The open steppe landscape, on the other hand, was ideal. The peoples of herder warriors first used wagons also for transporting loads, making it possible to take supplies, water and tents with them when they migrated with the herds. As a result, they considerably extended their radius, left the vicinity of the settlements for months on end and penetrated deeper into previously unused areas of the steppes.[46] The result was an enormous expansion of the areas of their pastures and, again, an increase in the number of their livestock. In this way the men lived as semi-nomads, leaving the settlements and the arduous, already poor cereal cultivation to the women and children.[47]

The land seizure of the open steppe marks the time of the Yamnaya culture, which actually encompasses several cultures from the Volga to the Black Sea (Early Yamnaya 3,400–3,200). One typical feature are the Kurgan graves of the chieftains with ever higher grave mounds, which lie partly near the settlements, partly visible from afar in the open steppe.[48] The importance of wagons for the expansion of the chieftains' possessions is shown by the fact that these were placed in their graves.

The next severely cold period started between 3,300 and 3,000, marking the end of the more favorable phase, shrinking the amount of woodland in the forest ←262 | 263→steppe and turning large areas of the grass steppe into desert. The herder warriors now had to move their vast herds more often and in larger migration circles, until some areas were completely overgrazed and conflicts with neighboring tribes increased dramatically. Finally, the fertile pastures and rich cities in the west lured them once again. Around 3,300–3,000 a second great wave of invasions by Indo-Europeans, composed of mounted warriors and people with ox-drawn wagons, flowed into the lower Danube valley as far as the Carpathian Basin (Hungary). The thousands of kurgans in Southeast Europe and beyond testify to this expansion in land seizure.[49] The early Indo-European language spread across the various regions as these were overtaken, it later led to the Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, Italic, Slavic, Armenian, and Phrygian languages.[50]

Characterizing this revolutionary process, some archaeologists say that the early Yamnaya culture "penetrated" other cultures everywhere—apparently again in a nice and peaceful way![51] In fact, this second wave of invasions had devastating consequences for the matriarchal cultures of Europe and also for the Tripolje culture in Ukraine. Large regions with settlements and towns in the border area were abandoned as people fled to the north.[52] At the same time, a new social form emerged in the south of the Tripolje region: the subjugation of the rest of the native population to the new masters from the steppe (Usatovo culture, around 3,300–3,200) (see Map 5). The cemeteries here have large kurgans with daggers and axes, which were laid out separately and where only skeletons of adult men have been found. The other burials consisted of flat graves containing women, men and children from the graceful type of the native peoples; they had been given female figurines as grave goods. It is completely wrong to speak of "cultural integration" here, because there was no mixing of cultures. Instead, a strict social division of two classes was introduced and maintained with violence by a military elite. The latter can be seen in the many injuries from clubs on the skeletons of the people in the flat graves, while the men in the kurgans had no such wounds.[53] This is the *third phase of conflicts*, because violence has now proliferated: instead of expulsion it is now conquest. An older society is conquered by intruders who possess and systematically use weapons technology—even if this has not been planned and organized from the beginning. Instead of chasing ←263 | 264→away or murdering the natives, the conquerors now found it more convenient and lucrative to keep the defeated people alive to work for their new rulers.[54]

The term "acculturation" which is often applied is mistaken in this case, because egalitarian societies with a matriarchal social order do not adopt patriarchal patterns of domination, but are subjected to them. This is the *initial establishment of domination* whose only purpose is to hold down and exploit the majority of people from another culture with a small but armed minority (enforcement staff). Now the first rigid hierarchy of rulers and of oppressed people was born, combined with the self-assertiveness of the elite to be the superior humans, proud of their new power over others that comes from weapons. This characterizes the beginning of *patriarchal thought and ideology.*[55] The first two-tiered class society was thus invented, that is, an early cell of patriarchy, very quickly followed by others. Its characteristics are that the coercion from above and resistance from below leads to incessant inner tension and social misery.

Another innovation was found in the kurgans of these early Yamnaya rulers, because the daggers no longer consisted of flint but of bronze. This was the beginning of the Early Bronze Age in the steppe cultures.

However, here we can see that bronze “per se” was not the cause of the new conflicts and the emergence of domination, nor indeed was it any other single cause, but the whole chain of negative bundles of causes and effects we have presented here. The bronze daggers were more like symbols of prestige similar to the earlier copper objects, because battles were still fought with stone clubs and stone battleaxes.

Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin, and the coppersmiths in the northern Caucasus, where there were plenty of metals, had already begun such experiments some time before (beginning in 3,700). Indo-European warrior groups now took over the land of bronze culture at the Caucasus, where their Maikop culture developed (3,500–3,200) (see Map 5). Only centuries later did bronze objects appear in the steppes of the Caspian and Black Sea (around 3,300–3,200) ←264 | 265→and even a millennium later in Central and West Europe (2,400–2,200). The great Neolithic cultures were still flourishing here, and people were obviously not very interested in bronze.[56] In other words, bronze metallurgy had not changed their way of life to date, just as copper metallurgy had not. A new technology alone cannot change a way of life that has existed for millennia; much more far-reaching conditions are necessary for this to happen.

A third cold period afflicted the steppes of the Caucasus, the Caspian and Black Sea in the 3rd millennium and destroyed any remaining agriculture. The forest steppe decreased extensively, the grass steppe dried out continuously and deserts grew, jeopardizing the steppe peoples and leading to the Late Yamnaya in the Middle Bronze Age (2,800–2,600).[57] References to houses and settlements now disappear completely. Apart from tents, covered wagons became the dwellings for the now fully nomadic herder warriors.[58] Kurgan graves in the open steppe show repeated occupations with long distances in-between, indicating the people no longer remained at the site of their cemeteries. The herds had become too large to spend the winter at rivers and in swampland, and the herders now moved with them, also in winter, through the open country.[59] Attacks and robberies by armed groups became commonplace and rampant. It is a way of life in which the women taken along lose all relevance. Apart from occasionally gathering wild grains, their main role was to milk the herds and produce dairy products, which means that they became dispossessed servants to care for the property of men. All that still belonged to the women was the tent or yurt, with the household the daughter inherited from her mother.[60] Such deteriorating conditions led to a third wave of expansion from the Black Sea region to Europe, with devastating consequences.[61]

At the same time, a contrasting trend to this completely nomadic way of life developed: individual tribes secured the last resources for themselves by settling firmly on the scarce wetlands of the rivers they needed for their livestock in winter. This happened at the cost of having to seclude and defend themselves against the nomadic tribes, and they therefore surrounded their settlements with fortifications.[62] This situation became more extreme when metal was also mined and ←265 | 266→processed in these settlements, because people could not move away from their mines. The cultures of Sintashta and Arkaim in the South Urals (Late Bronze Age, 2,200–2,000), for example, created large settlements with massive fortifications of walls, ditches and watchtowers surrounding the dwelling-houses, which were built closely together in a circle for better seclusion (Fig. 3) (see Map 5). Such fortifications had never been seen in the steppes before. In Sintashta and Arkaim, metalworking equipment has been found in all the houses, as well as an abundance of copper and bronze objects, suggesting each house was an industrial place of metal production. This shows an enormous increase in metal processing, which was associated with trade based on monopoles in the hands of the chiefs.[63]

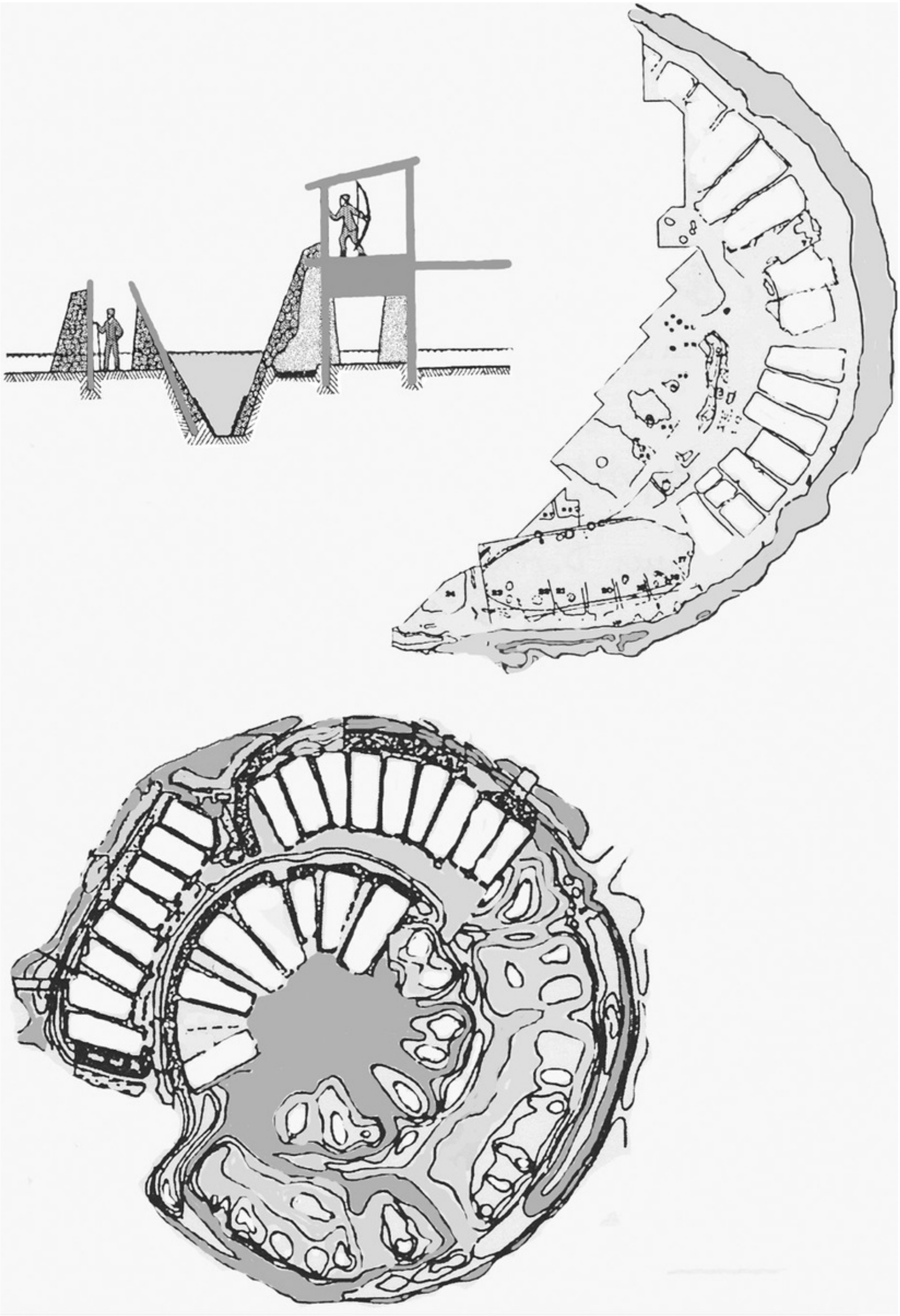


Fig. 3: Plan view of the fortified steppe settlements Sintašta (above) and Arkaim (below), with cross-sectional view of the defenses (above left), Ural Mountains (Russia) (Drawings by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Nevertheless, the defensive protection of the walls did not seem to deter the violent attacks from outside, thus a new offensive weapon was invented: the chariot. In that way, the wagon was transformed from a slow and peaceful vehicle into a fast and dangerous war machine, which had far-reaching consequences in human cultural history.[64] The most ancient remains of these light, two-wheeled chariots with spoked wheels, powered by two horses at the front, date from the end of the 3rd millennium. They have been discovered exclusively in the kurgan tombs of warriors (Fig. 4). These prominent deceased had also been given a rich arsenal of weapons consisting of copper daggers, bronze axes, bronze arrow and spearheads and the usual stone clubs. But that’s not all: entire horse teams had been sacrificed and buried; in one case eight complete horse skeletons were found in a grave.[65]

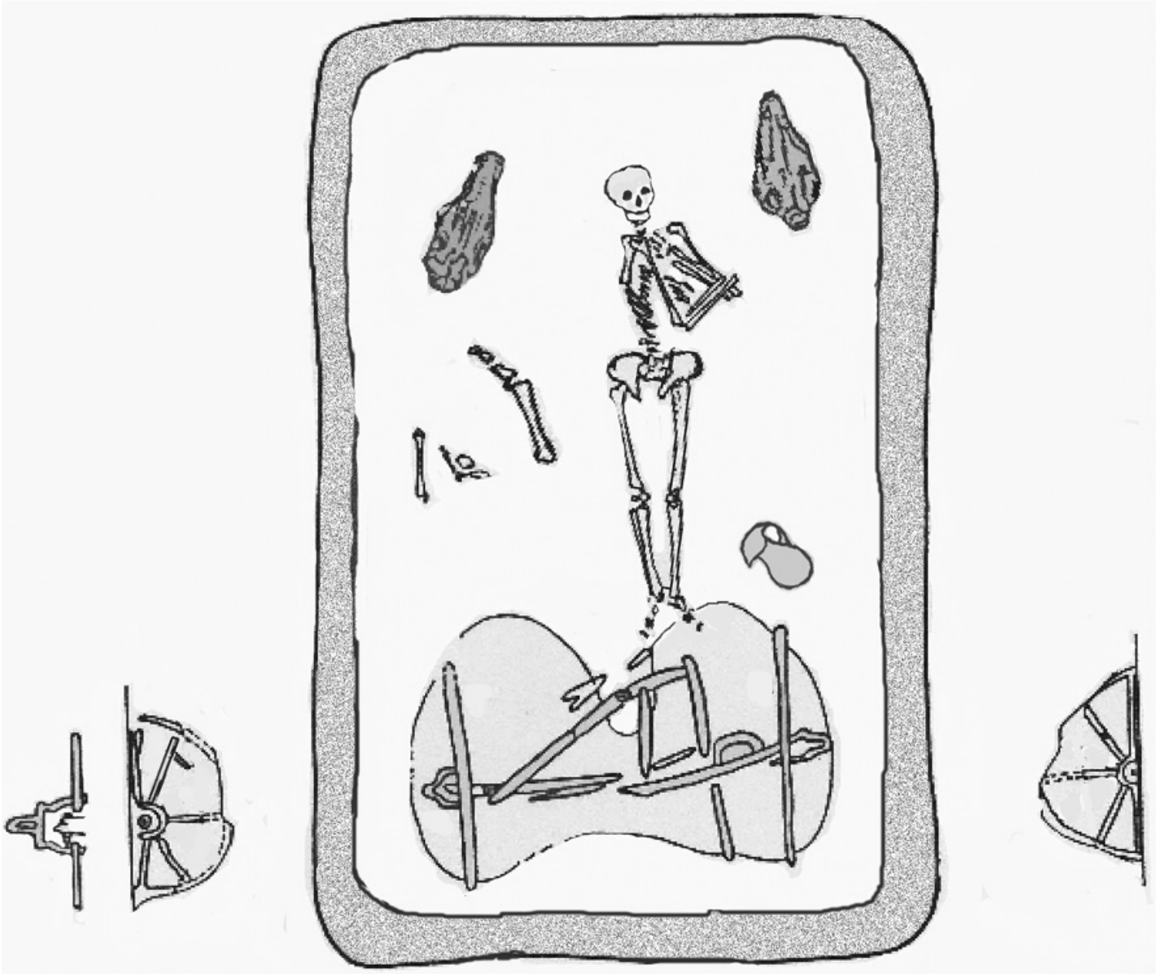


Fig. 4: Grave of a warrior with his chariot and two horse heads (Russia) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Chariots were expensive to build and difficult to steer, and required great wealth on the part of their owners, as well as being free from all duties in order to devote themselves entirely to weaponry. This reinforced the hierarchical patterns: a military caste of chieftains with their brothers in arms stood irreversibly at the head of society. It was the beginning of the later standing armies, because they had to be constantly present and maintained with great effort. Moreover, these professional warriors had to constantly have something to do, namely to wage war—which clearly distinguishes them from the earlier spontaneous feuds, ←266 | 267→ as well as the unpredictable raids and surprising conquests. This development means something new: the *beginning of organized war.*

Not least for this reason, the invention of the chariot spread across the steppes with lightning speed, the open terrain being suitable for it at best.[66] This is how an offshoot of the Sintashta culture in the east was established in the vastness of ←267 | 268→Kazakhstan (Petrovka culture). Around 1,900–1,800 two further chariot cultures followed that became even more extended: one stretched as far as the Altai Mountains and Yenisei River in Central Asia and to the Tien Shan Mountains further south (Andronovo culture), the other to the west as far as Dnieper (Srubnaya culture).[67] Through this east-west expansion, the Eurasian Steppe became, for the first time, an interconnected area which, through a chain of similar cultures although not identical peoples, extended from the northwestern regions of China to the southeastern regions of Europe.[68] Trade goods and new inventions spread across the entire Eurasian continent, especially bronze metallurgy and chariot warfare. Around 1,500, the kings of the Shang dynasty in China in the Far East were using chariots, as were the princes of the Mycenaean culture in Greece in the West. In the following period the "Steppe Highway" developed out of this, bringing exotic goods to Europe, but for thousands of years also bloody wars by armed peoples on horseback from the steppes, such as the Huns under Attila and the Mongols under Genghis Khan.[69]

←268 | 269→In the Bronze Age, the east-west expansion in the Eurasian Steppe was joined by the north-south expansion, and trade relations played an important role here at the beginning. For the inflated copper and bronze production in Sintashta and Arkaim was intended for export in order to satisfy the hunger of the southern urban cultures for these metals. Traders used the well-known routes, accompanied by chariot warriors and protected by bases, from the Urals to the northern edge of the Caucasus and the Kopet-Dag Mountains and from there to the urban cultures of Margiana and Bactria. From there these metal goods were traded further into the Iranian highlands to the urban cultures of Elam and Baluchistan, and further to Anatolia and Mesopotamia. The trade routes led even further south to the urban Indus culture in northwest India (see Map 4). In this way, the northern steppes were linked for the first time with the urban cultural regions in the South, and information about the wealthy countries there with their magnificent cities reached the warlike chieftains of the steppes. This would have fatal consequences in the following centuries. It is because these steppe peoples east of the Urals with their Indo-Iranian language are seen as the ancestors of those peoples who soon used these routes to the South for their conquests.[70]

Social Order: Domination over Women

Here we are concerned with the question of what happened to women in these hierarchical herder warrior societies. Their loss of economic significance was followed by their social humiliation, which resulted in the Indo-European patrilineal and patrilocal family with strict father-based rights. This is shown by a linguistic analysis of the Indo-European concepts of kinship.[71] In what steps did that happen? For this family form is not self-evident just because it is so familiar to us.

By no means is every herder culture or even herder warrior culture automatically patriarchal, as can be seen from the Tuareg peoples in the Sahara Desert. These are traditionally organized according to the mother-line, and the women live together matrilocally as “mistresses of the tents.” The herds are owned by the community and watched over by the women. These are regarded as the providers because they distribute the animal products they produce equally and for the good of all.[72] Even the Indo-European steppe peoples were not always patriarchal—for which there is no evidence, but also once possessed matriarchal patterns. However, among them, the increasing warfare of the chieftains led to hierarchical patterns and to private ownership of cattle, resulting in considerable imbalance in society.

Anyone who dominates by means of an enforcement staff can not only override egalitarian rules of possession, but also rules of the traditional matriarchal way of life together with its values. In this way, the previously comprehensive, sacred order was violated by extracting parts which were then misused to strengthen power. This profanation particularly affected animals and women. Animals lost the sacredness they had possessed in the Palaeolithic and Neolithic worldviews, and were now turned into a mere resource broadly exploited for personal power. Female animals were regarded as a kind of “breeding machine” because they reproduce the herds. At the same time, livestock breeders discovered the necessary precondition to make female animals fertile: insemination by males. With the incipient patriarchalization in these societies, for men this was a manifestation of their biological power.

This discovery was by no means a trigger for patriarchalization—as is still claimed in a naive and enormous overestimation of the act of procreation. In contemporary matriarchal societies, man’s participation is often known and he is honored at certain feasts, but it does not result in the father-line being used as a basis for structuring society. In spite of this knowledge, people still adhere to the belief that the ancestors of their clan cause pregnancy by slipping an ancestral soul into a young woman, in order to be reborn in the same clan. In other words, conception, pregnancy and childbirth were regarded as entirely sacred matters.[73] Thus, in the millennia before patriarchalization, man’s participation in a woman’s pregnancy was an unknown matter. Because the sexual freedom of women meant that there was no form of monogamy, which is a prerequisite for the recognition of biological paternity. Instead the rebirth religion, in the sense just mentioned, was deeply rooted in society. For the emergence of “fatherhood” and the “father-line,” other factors had to be added, and above all the ancient rebirth religion had to be superseded!

The ruling men of the warrior elite soon transferred the approach to ownership and exploitation they had obtained with their herds to the human sphere. If de-divinized animals could be transformed into their profane private property, why not also de-divinized women? Their observation that the male “alpha animal” is the trigger for pregnancy in female animals in order to produce a large number of young cattle was now applied to themselves as “human alphas,” and they began to despise the rebirth religion, which gives women a special sacredness. But they still hadn’t achieved anything through this.

←270 | 271→

They faced another serious problem related to inheritance: who should inherit a mighty chief's private wealth to ensure it did not return to the community? For this the chief needed an individual heir, his own son, who should resemble the individual chief in every way. In other words, it was a matter of hereditary ownership and rank in the male line. But because a man cannot produce his son himself, the chief needed a woman as a means to an end.

Undoubtedly this proposition did not meet with the approval of his community, because such degradation of women was unthinkable in the matriarchal tradition. But what happened when a rich chief gave a poorer clan a part of his herd to get a wife in exchange? What if he also promised to honor the woman at his side as the chief's wife? The clan caved in, and blinded by the splendor of his wealth and prestige, the woman also agreed to leave her clan. This created the "bride price" in cattle and the possession of a woman, who was followed by a second, younger woman as she got older.[74] This practice must have spread very quickly among the warrior elite. In the end, there were far fewer rich men who wanted to marry a daughter from a poorer clan. Then the situation was reversed, and poorer clans offered a powerful man their daughter together with a "bridal gift" or dowry to win him over as an ally.[75]

In every variant the woman inevitably became owned by the man and had to live with him. He "guarded" and "chastised" his woman like his cows. In his eyes this was necessary to make her obedient and strictly monogamous—how else could he be sure that she would bear *his* son as the only legitimate heir and not that of a secret lover? Therefore, she had to be given to him as a "virgin," that is, sexually untouched, which meant that the father and brothers in her own family had to guard her strictly so that she wouldn't lose value. Then her monogamy was ←271 | 272→enforced by completely depriving her of her personal freedom. This imprisonment of the woman was provided for by his warrior entourage, which constantly watched over her. She was threatened with death for any lapse in sexual diligence as the chief saw this as damaging his property. Her lover was seen as a thief of the chief's property and was also killed, like a cattle thief.[76] These customs were brutal, but they resulted from the logic of private ownership.

This is the true origin of the monogamous form of marriage, which is by no means “natural,” but rather a complicated and socially difficult pattern, because it was carried out under duress. Only after this had happened consistently could a chief recognize “his own son” and have him brought up as he wished, among warriors. Only then did the term “father” emerge, which was a term of power and not of loving care. Only when his son, as an adult, succeeded in imposing the same difficult pattern could a rudimentary “father-line” emerge as early patrilinearity. And only when it had been applied over a longer period of time could something like a “paternal clan” as early patrilocality emerge. Because each time the matrilineal traditions had to be overridden, which certainly did not happen without resistance from the community. In addition, these patterns were limited to the warrior elite, who could afford such a massive effort and cost. Commoners, especially the women excluded from the elite, continued with the ancient matriarchal traditions to some extent.

We see that paternity and the father-line arose from the tactics of power. From the very beginning, these were an instrument of domination over women, appropriating their ability to give birth and, in addition, their labor and skills. The men from the warrior elite increased their power with one, two or more women, because they needed a large number of obedient sons. These men could dispose of their possessions as they wished, which even led to them being masters of life and death concerning their wives and children, just as they were of their cattle. The early Indo-European word “pot” means both “father” (Latin: “pater”) and “power” (Latin: “potestas”) and makes this link evident: it designates the despotic chief and warrior-patriarch.[77]

←272 | 273→This possessive mentality also includes the fact that not only their favorite animals, namely horses, had to follow the chieftains when they died, but also their wives, sometimes together with any offspring who were still minors. A chieftain’s wife paid this price of death for her elevated status, for without the mighty man she had no value. This process, which is trivially called “widow killing,” in fact represents human sacrifice and is archaeologically well-documented: such simultaneous burials of a man with one or two women (polygyny) have been found in many rich kurgans. There were also burials of a man with women and children, in one case also with two youths and a servant (Figs. 5 and 6).[78] This was continued: in the royal tombs of the Scythians, besides gold treasures, horse skeletons and the usual human sacrifices of royal wives and court servants have also been found.[79]

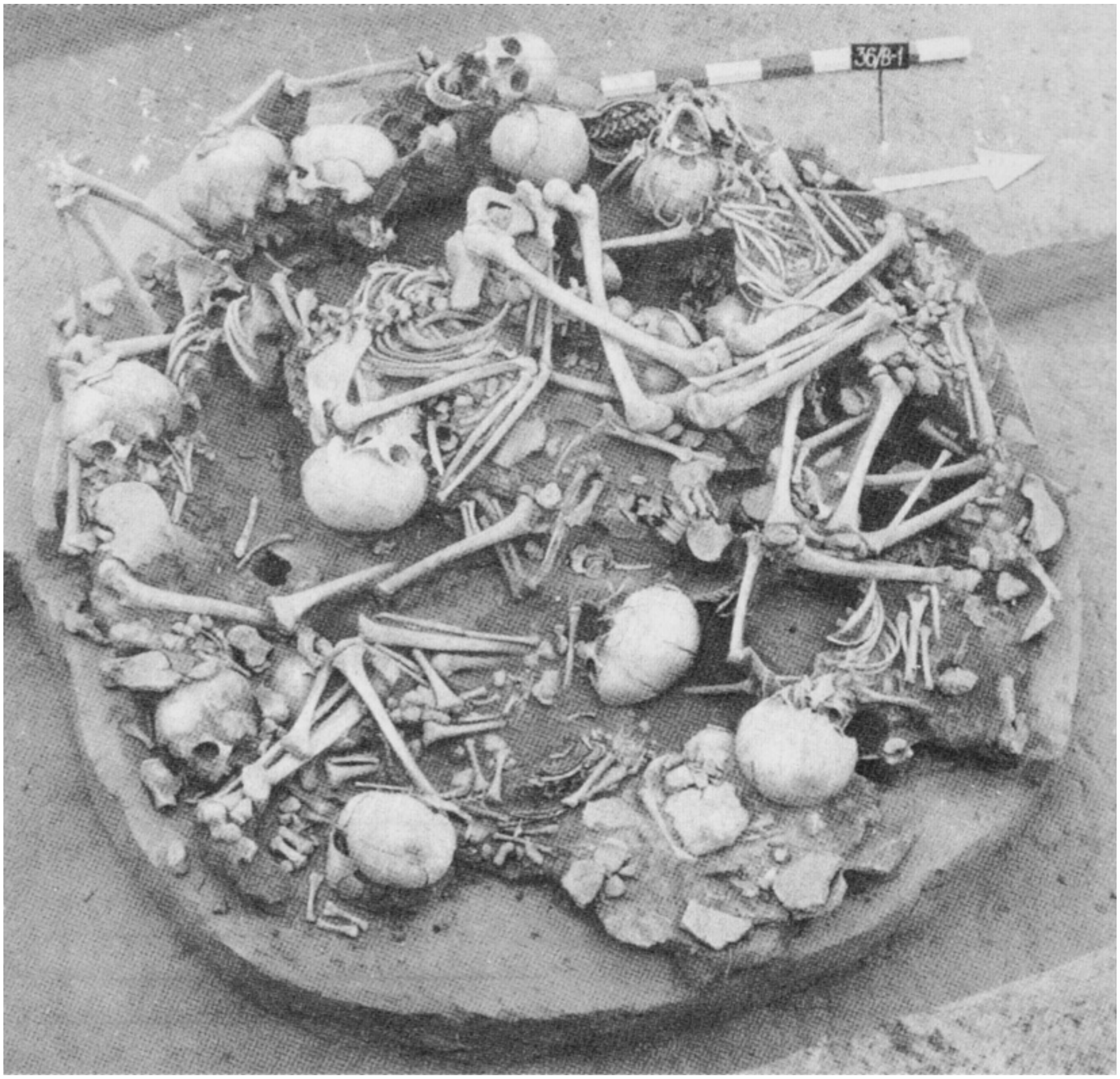
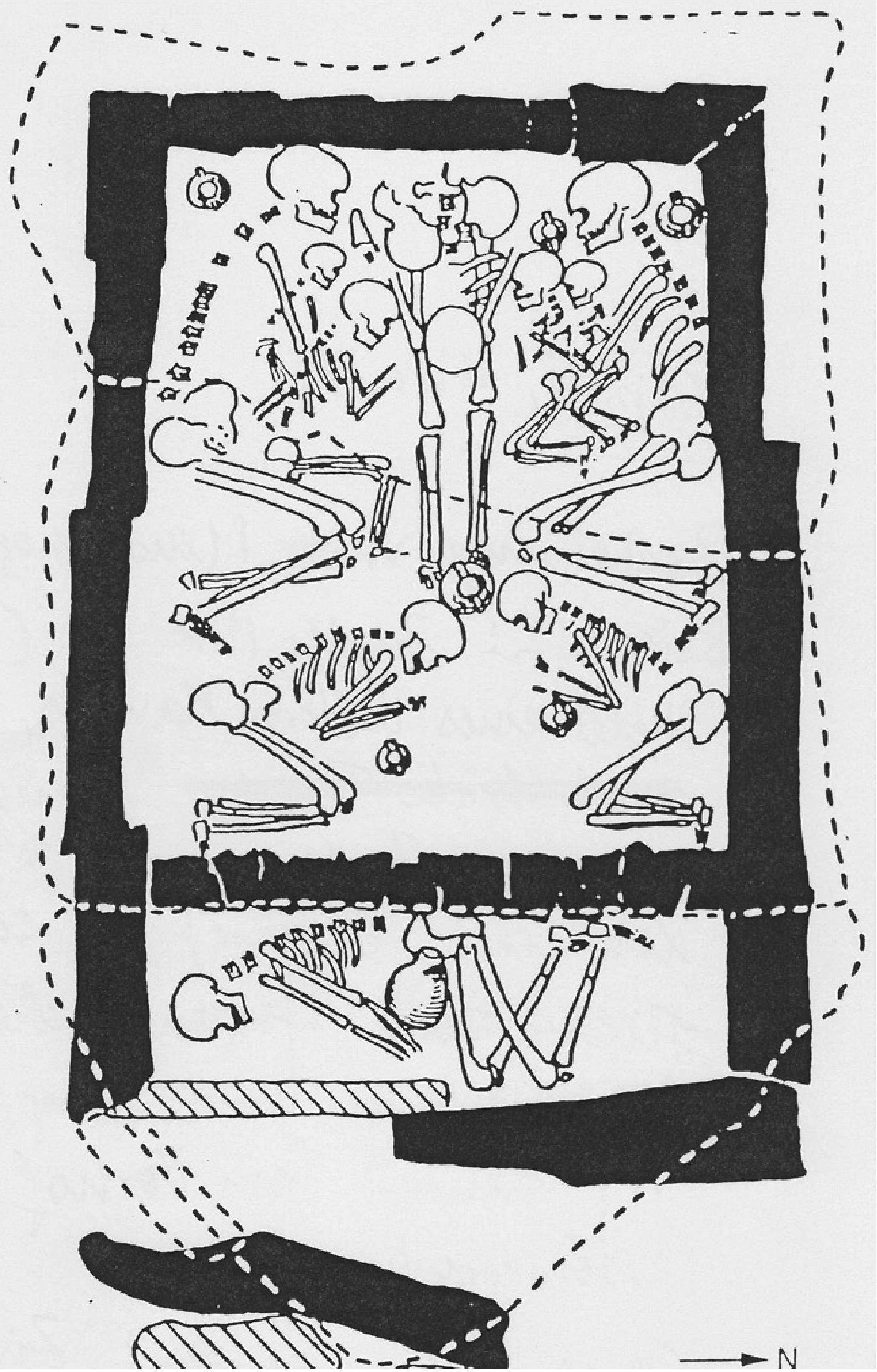


Fig. 5: Burial with human sacrifices, 1st example: An old man was buried at the center, women and children were grouped around him in a

circle (South Poland)



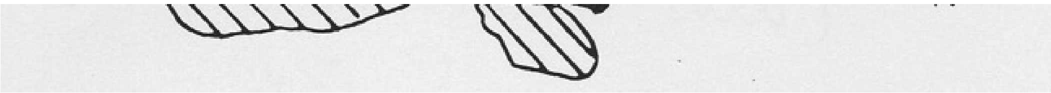


Fig. 6: Burial with human sacrifices, 2nd example: The lower half of an old man's skeleton can be seen at the center, flanked by two women, each one with two children, aged 1–8, at his feet two adolescents, a male aged 15 and a female aged 17, in the outer chamber a younger man. (Wolynia, Ukraine)

←273 | 274→

Worldview and Religion: Ideology of Purity and "God the Father"

As far as our knowledge of religion and ideology of Indo-Europeans is concerned, ethnological comparisons and the mythology handed down later become relevant here. Ethnologically, we are in a favorable situation: the Indo-European tribes of the Kafirs live in the Hindu Kush Mountains, which borders the Kazakhstan steppe in the south and rise as a high barrier against the lowlands of the Indus Valley (northwestern India) (see Map 4).[80] They are organized patriarchally based on patrilocality and the father-line and belong to the Aryans. They did not take part in the Indo-European conquest of Northwest India by the Aryans around 2,000, but settled down halfway. Here they did not mix with a subjugated people, ←274 | 275→as often happened in India, but in the seclusion of the mountains they managed to preserve forms of their ancient language and traditions until the present. By no means are they blond and blue-eyed, as "Aryans" should be, but dark-haired and dark-eyed, with a few exceptions.[81]

The Kafirs have a long, warlike past and once ruled over the whole area.[82] Their thinking, social structure and economy are entirely permeated by a hierarchical dualism that is based on the law of the strongest. The stronger members, the warriors, make the weaker, such as craftsmen, their slaves and force them to work for free. This hierarchy is cemented by a dualistic ideology of purity; for example, the enslaved craftsmen carry out so-called “impure” activities, while the noble warriors are only engaged in “pure” activities: in the profession of arms and war.

The most conservative Kafirs today are the Kalash. They once retreated in order to remain free men, moving into the most inaccessible, steep valleys of the Hindu Kush Mountains, a very remote area. They now regard the valleys they inhabit as a “pure” island in a hostile, “impure” (Muslim) outside world, whose Islamic missionary work they repelled.[83] They preserved their strict dualism, which cements their hierarchy of the superior and the inferior, of the stronger and the weaker, always separating and devaluing the others. It is founded on the dualism of the sexes, which underlies their general dualism and their ideology of purity.[84] This stands in sharp contrast to thinking in terms of polar entities, such as male and female, which are seen as two equivalent halves that are integrated on a par with each other and thus well balanced, as in the worldview of matriarchal societies.

In the patriarchal dualism, the “strong” and “pure” men stand above the “weak” and “impure” women. Women are believed to be inherently “impure” because female bodily functions related to reproduction, such as menstruation and childbirth, are considered to be profoundly “impure.” Illness, death and decay are also “impure,” being assigned to the female sphere. In particular, sexual intercourse with women makes men “impure,” but nevertheless it is still popular. ←275 | 276→The “purest” people are therefore boys and youths who have yet to experience sexual intercourse. They must be treated with reverence by women, even by their own mothers.[85]

The economy and landscape are also divided in two parts by the Kalash according to this dualistic purity ideology. The scant agriculture is done by the women, and the small fields are situated below the settlements close to the water, that is, in the lower part of the landscape. Working the soil is seen as a low occupation, “polluting” and profane, like the women themselves. Herding—here with goats, since cattle and horses cannot be kept in these mountainous valleys—is, on the other hand, an occupation for men and is carried out in the high regions of the mountains, that is, in the upper part of the landscape. This activity on the mountain pastures near the sky is considered sacred and may only be undertaken by “pure” boys and young men. Even the goats are considered sacred, and thus the goat is venerated here instead of the general Indo-European horse and cattle cult. Every goat pen in the village is a holy place, where the men ritually slaughter a goat for feasts as the “purest” sacrificial animal, whose meat only they are allowed to eat. The boys assist with these sacrifices in a quasi-priestly role. The women, who have to observe many taboos anyway because of their “impurity,” are forbidden to approach these holy pens or even to climb up to the mountain pastures. They must stay in the village and in the lower part of the landscape, close to the fields, where the cemeteries are also located. The men, in turn, don’t go to these places, but not out of respect for the women’s sphere, but in order not to become “impure” themselves.[86]

However, this cannot be carried out strictly, because sexual intercourse with women or participation in funerals takes place; but the contact with the “impure” results in long purification ceremonies for the men afterwards. The women on their side, after menstruation and childbirth—which take place in menstrual huts far from the village—also have to carry out protracted purifying rituals. However, these rituals do not “purify” them, but merely allow them to live in the village again.[87] Nevertheless, Kalash women move relatively freely and unveiled, even though their heads must always be covered; they wear a pretty bonnet of cowrie shells. They even sometimes have extramarital relationships and can demand a divorce, because such a small society cannot afford too much moral ←276 | 277→austerity.[88] But women are seen as a temptation and a constant disturbance of male purity and sacredness, although this does not prevent wealthy men from having two wives.[89]

In this way, the Indo-European idea of purity turned the situation upside down by denigrating the ancient sanctity of the female ability of child-bearing and reversing it in the opposite direction. But the Kalash women have an answer to their constant humiliation. In their own places, such as the birth and menstrual huts and the cemetery, they strictly adhere to this sanctity of their ability to give birth and celebrate it. They present it as a kind of “counter-sanctity” to the constant self-exaltation of men.[90] Here, ideas from the matriarchal belief of rebirth have been preserved, which was never completely suppressed among the lower classes in Indo-European societies.[91]

The Kalash also show their early Indo-European heritage in their religion, combined with remnants of ancient matriarchal beliefs. They don’t have any temples, something which archaeological has also found to be the case with the early Indo-Europeans; like these, they also have no word for “temple.”[92] Instead, the Kalash erect open outdoor altars, made of boulders, also strictly separated by gender: the men’s altars are located above the village and are considered sacred, while the women’s altars are located below the village and considered profane.[93] A carved board at each altar is dedicated to a deity, and the men’s altars have wooden horseheads protruding forwards.[94] No priests are involved in venerating the respective deity, but this is carried out by the men or women themselves. Here, too, the men’s ritual act consists solely of the slaughtering of animals, while the women make exclusively plant offerings.[95] The early Indo-Europeans had no priests either, because the ruling chieftains did not need them. No archaeological ←277 | 278→evidence exists for priest’s graves, because religion was not yet institutionalized.[96] The early Indo-European open-air altars were the kurgans, the tombs of great men.

The Kalash deities show the same hierarchical dualism that already applies to the human world. Men’s gods have to do with war and herding and are considered “higher,” while the goddesses of the women are related to agriculture, birth and death and considered “lower” deities.[97] Such a division into higher and lower deities also is the general practice of all Indo-European peoples and was unknown to matriarchal cultures. It is particularly noticeable, however, that the “lower” women’s goddesses are much more generalized than the men’s gods. For example, Jestak, the goddess of children and thus of all clans, whose life force she embodies, is venerated in the shape of her symbol in all houses where people live and have their meetings, by women and men alike. She is even said to have been the ancestress of all other deities in ancient times, making it evident that she is a matriarchal primordial mother-goddess.[98] No less primordial is Dezalik, the goddess of birth and death, who is venerated in the birth and menstruation huts. She brings souls and also takes them back, presumably to let them return to life again through rebirth.[99] No myths exist for these two Kalash goddesses; they probably did not need them because of they were so universal. But it is evident that they date back to an ancient layer of matriarchal religion.

The more mythical stories revolve around the “higher” male gods of the Kalash, making them appear more limited. As gods of heaven and war, they don’t refer to processes related to life; instead they compete with each other for land and valleys, they fight, outwit, defeat and displace each other.[100] This is not a reflection of any deified condition but rather of human ones, as they were notoriously played out among the warlike clans and tribes of the early Indo-Europeans. These gods have been invented by men projecting their own status as herders and warriors and their battle stories onto deities. They are not generally venerated, but are related to a specific local area or region depending on where their followers have prevailed. Presumably, therefore, their artificial “sanctity” had to be asserted all the more fiercely against women and subjected people since, on closer examination, the relationship claimed by the Kalash between “sacred” and “profane” is almost reversed to the contrary here.

←278 | 279→After this revealing ethnological example, let us look at comparative mythology. Here linguistics has shown that the term “God the Father” exists in all Indo-European languages, going back to the early Indo-European “dyeus pater.”[101] He is associated with the sky and is regarded as the creator god who brought forth all deities and humans—although it is never clarified how he is meant to have done this. In part, he imitated women’s ability to give birth in order to bring forth deities, in part he relied on his craftsmanship and made humans through pottery, and he even created them out of the blood of slain gods.[102] It is evident that here the mighty father-chief was deified and lifted up into the sky after he had humiliated or made invisible the mother goddess, be it as Mother Earth or human primordial ancestress. In his concrete forms this Father-God rules and punishes and defends his power by force, like the "pater familias" on earth. Earlier goddesses now became his dependent wives, sisters and daughters, and former sons of the goddesses were made into *his* sons and vassals.[103]

The relation of this god with the sky is evident for the steppe peoples because the sun and the stars guide them in the infinite vastness, and their survival depends on finding their way from one watering place to the next. In contrast to agricultural peoples, the earth hardly means anything to them. If earth-related mother goddesses nevertheless occur in the various Indo-European mythologies, these are remnants from the formerly matriarchal past of these peoples or takeovers from subjugated matriarchal peoples, and they are always considered as "inferior."

The separation from the mother goddess and from the rebirth religion associated with her had unfortunate consequences for the heroes of the Indo-European elite. Without the hope of rebirth, all they could do was to imagine that, after death, they would live as pale shadows in the underworld, flitting aimlessly around. Those who had fallen in battle were believed to have a slightly milder fate: they were allowed to indulge in never-ending celebrations and excessive drinking in the halls of the underworld. But none had the prospect of ever getting out of the gloomy underworld.[104]

←279 | 280→The general Indo-European god of war is also associated with the sky; not with the bright sky, however, but with a dark firmament, rumbling and threatening with thunderstorms. It was believed that the god of war drove by on his chariot in roaring storms and hurled axes, clubs, hammers and thunderbolts that flash as lightning and roll as thunder.[105] Wherever such war gods appeared, they were regarded as powerful, dangerous and tyrannical—a reflection of the Indo-European reality. But in these early patriarchal societies there seems to have been a certain presentiment that a world that relies on violence would also die by violence. This is supported by the myth of the "final battle," which occurs several times in Indo-European mythologies and always results in the “twilight of the gods,” in other words, their downfall.[106] Usually only one being survives this gruesome scenario: Mother Earth who renews herself from herself.

5.2 The Situation in Asia Minor and the Amazon Question

Chronology

3rd millennium BCE:	Early Bronze Age: Amazon cities on the island of Lemnos and at the West coast of Asia Minor
3rd and 2nd millennium:	Early and Middle Bronze Age: Amazon settlements at the Thermodon River at the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor
Around 1,200:	Amazons in the Trojan War
End of the 2nd millennium:	Amazons in the southern Caucasus
First half of the 1st millennium:	Alliance of Amazons with nomadic peoples north of the Caucasus[107]

←280 | 281→

Critical Preliminary Remarks

The Amazon theme provides many hints of female resistance to the emerging early patriarchy. But unfortunately, this topic has been dealt with very badly, and is as much a point of contention as the topic of “matriarchy.” Here, too, the effort to conduct serious research has been discriminated against and marginalized, and a negative conformism has been created to prevent any serious investigation. In addition, the Amazon theme has been fragmented into Greek myths on the one hand and strange archaeological finds on the other—and all this based on unexplained terms and definitions. The fact is, however, that reports of warlike women in

Eurasia are extensive and have lasted for an incredibly long time, suggesting they are not merely a product of the imagination.

Scholars of ancient Greek art and literature tend to repeat the Greek Amazon myths endlessly as mere stories, without considering that myths usually contain a historical core that can be deciphered. Such an attitude also reflects Greek eurocentrism, because they do not include the stories of warrior women from other peoples.[108] Compared with the Greek myths, these seem more realistic and are much less biased by the neurotic fear of warlike women who might endanger the young patriarchy of Greek tribes and cities. For one principle applies in Greek myths and artistic representations: Amazons must be destroyed! Therefore, they are always seen as the defeated who are just receiving the deadly blow from a man (vase paintings, sculptures) or who are overthrown by the great Greek heroes with furtiveness and violence (myths). The narratives of many Eurasian peoples provide a different view: here warlike women are mostly portrayed as being victorious. After fierce battles with them, the fighting spirit of the men often gives way to admiration, and they try to establish alliances with them, especially to win them as lovers—an idea alien to the Greek heroes.[109]

Another strategy for obscuring the Amazon question is to overuse the term “myth.” Some serious ancient authors have written about the Amazons, such as Herodotus, Strabon and Diodor, who were two millennia closer to this phenomenon than today’s scholars. They always considered the Amazons as a fact. Additionally, Homer, in his epic “The Iliad,” lists by name the tribes that came to rescue the fought-over city of Troy, including one tribe of the Amazons as ←281 | 282→an independent people. Furthermore, ancient Greek cities on the West coast of Asia Minor minted Amazons on their coins because they venerated them as the founders of their communities. Today’s scholars certainly believe the reports of ancient authors about peoples of that time, because much has been archaeologically confirmed, but with regard to the Amazons the same authors are supposed to have “invented.” Their statements about Amazons are collectively referred to as a “myth,” and these authors are assumed to have been unable to distinguish between the real and the fictitious and to have mixed them up. Some scholars speak of a modern “expanded understanding of myth” by describing the history of the “myth of the Amazons,” but not the history itself of the Amazons. This has the obvious intention not to attribute anything real to the Amazons under any circumstances.[110]

One revealing claim is that Amazon myths were only invented to legitimize male domination in ancient Greece—an argument often put forward. The myths were to show Greek women, especially Athenian women, that their oppressed position was “natural,” while the Amazons violated the “natural order,” which is why they had to perish. One cannot help but wonder why such myths are necessary when it is assumed that there has always been male domination? If male domination has always been the case, it does not need to be legitimized. Indirectly it is admitted that the Greek patriarchy is historically quite young and there was something else before—but this question is regularly avoided. For it is related to the issue of the cultural background of the Amazons and their struggle for independence. As long as this is obscured, one cannot understand the Amazon phenomenon.

Even archaeological facts fall victim to such prejudices. Thus, before skeleton analysis could be carried out, all graves containing weapons were declared to be male graves—that’s why warlike women did not exist. When skeleton analysis proved that the Eurasian peoples had graves with armed women, it was said the weapons had been given to them as symbolic protection for the hereafter, but they themselves did not fight.[111] This opinion was overruled by more refined skeleton analysis, revealing typical wear deformations on the bones of these women due to the constant use of weapons. Thus, there were warrior ←282 | 283→women after all, and it is now assumed that even more such finds will come to light.[112]

However, we are faced with a fundamental question here: were all these armed women Amazons or not? Today the growing trend is to call every individual female warrior or every defensive woman an “Amazon,” irrespective of her relationship with men and her culture, even being used for today’s women regarding their horsemanship.[113] This means no precise definition exists of what Amazons actually are. This deficiency is just as problematic in conventional social science as it is in the odious subject of “matriarchy,” which is automatically attacked without being defined, in both cases resulting in contradictory and ideological argumentation.

Let us take a closer look at how the ancient authors at the beginning of the first millennium defined the Amazons, based on their direct knowledge or on direct reports from others. They described “Amazons” as a special phenomenon, as “warrior communities made up exclusively of women.” They formed a society without men and knew how to assert their independence through their strength in fighting.[114] That means the Amazons did not fight together with men like many other warrior women. Consequently, not every female warrior is automatically an Amazon, but every Amazon is of course a warrior.[115] Thus “Amazons” are an all-female people who practiced gender segregation.[116]

The Amazon phenomenon cannot be understood without studying the cultural background from which it originates, this being the matriarchal form of society.[117] The Amazons as warlike female communities are not merely a gender issue of swapped identity, but a cultural-historical form of society to be explored. However, it should be noted that Amazon communities, despite their matriarchal background and many matriarchal elements, were no longer classical ←283 | 284→matriarchies.[118] To investigate this in more detail, we need to consider the history of the Amazons as far as it has been researched today.

The History of the Amazons

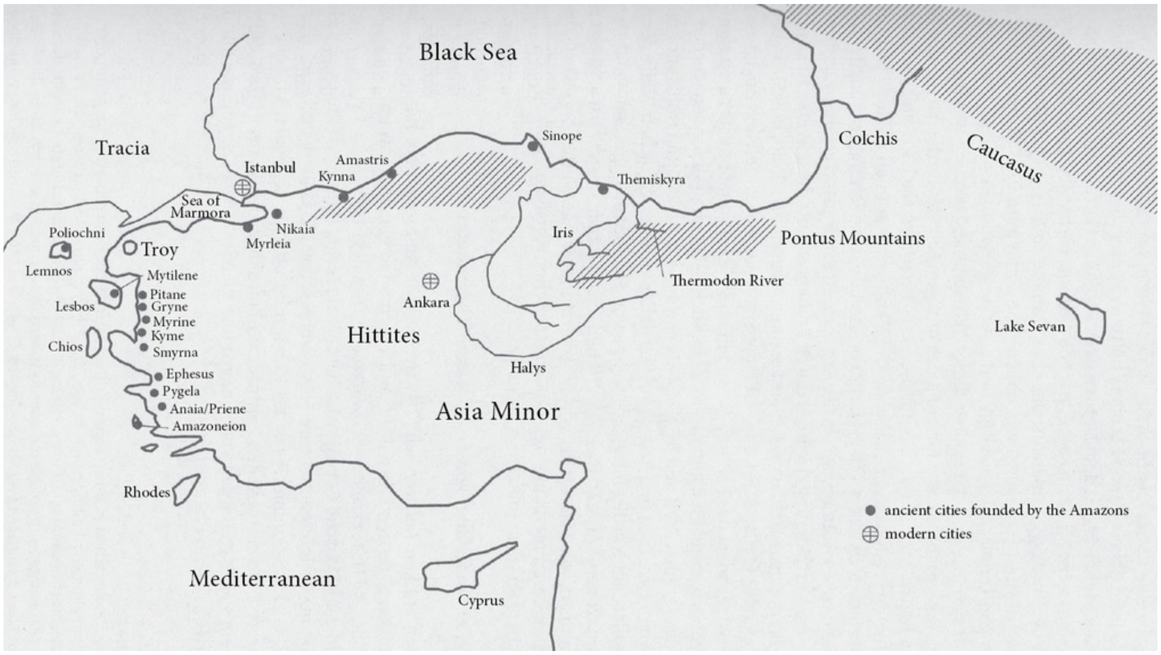
A number of female and male scholars have made a serious effort to investigate the Amazon phenomenon.[119] For some, however, their important contributions fall short, because they fail to make the distinction between “Amazon” and “warrior woman.” Due to this confusion warlike women are frequently called “Amazons” among the nomad peoples in the Eurasian Steppe, of whom an increasing number of graves are being discovered. This is also incorrect chronologically, because these graves originate from the Scythian cultural area, as the Scythians did not settle north of the Black Sea until the 7th century BCE (Iron Age). The tales about warrior women by Eurasian peoples from the Caucasus to North China are dated even later, from the 5th-4th centuries.[120]

Greek reports of the Amazons suggest a considerably older time. The oldest source is Homer’s epic “The Iliad,” written in the 8th century but based on a long history of oral tradition dating back to the Bronze Age, as illustrated by the bronze weapons of the heroes in front of Troy and their battles with chariots (around 1,200). This means the cultural background of the Amazons lies in the Bronze Age, the epoch characterized by the emergence of early patriarchy and the consequent impact on matriarchal societies.

Let us look at the situation in Asia Minor, which lies at the heart of this issue as, from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, it contained important matriarchal ←284 | 285→cultures. In Central Anatolia, for example, the highly developed palace culture of the Hatti, a long-established people with a late-matriarchal social order, flourished in the second half of the 2nd millennium. The Hatti organized themselves politically through a council of elders, in which the queen (Hattic: “Tawananna”) headed a women’s council of elders, the clan mothers. As the high priestess and sacred head of the people, she was also the representative to the outside world. The men’s council of elders consisted of the brothers of the clan mothers, which indicates evident matrilinearity. They were the executive and carried out the decisions of the women’s council of elders. They were led by a king (Hattic: “Tabarna”) who was the queen’s brother, son or nephew, and who organized the actions of the executive. These matriarchal patterns of the Hatti in terms of their people and succession to the throne have ancient, Anatolian roots.[121]

←285 | 286→Even on the West coast of Asia Minor there were matriarchal traditions in the Bronze Age, which were able to survive for a long time on large offshore islands such as Lemnos, Lesbos and Chios

(Map 6). Lemnos is of great interest for the history of the Amazons, since it already had a highly developed culture in the Early Bronze Age. Archaeologists have found three cities from the 4th millennium, Poliochni, Myrina and Hephaistia, whose origins date back to the Neolithic Age. Due to the size of these cities, their discovery is considered sensational, since Poliochni was twice as big as Troy and much older.[122] The finds show that there were well-organized communities on the island with carefully built meeting houses, while the homes were all about the same size, being interconnected and made out of small, rough stones. They have a uniform appearance with few or no differences, typical of egalitarian matriarchal societies. The art of ceramics was outstanding, as was the art of goldsmithing. The fortress architecture of Poliochni with megalithic, cyclopean walls is remarkable. The fortress of Myrina also has cyclopean walls, a system of steps leading upwards, religious rooms carved into the rock and a monumental representation of a vulva in the rock.[123] Similar structures can be found in Hephaistia, where there was an important sanctuary for the Great Goddess, which continued in Greek and ←286 | 287→Roman times until the introduction of Christianity.[124] All these characteristics are typical of a matriarchal high culture. But what was their particular fate?


Black Sea
Tracia
Istanbul
Amastris
Kynna
Sinope
Colchis
Caucasus
Sea of Marmora
Nikaia
Myrleia
Themiskyra
Iris
Pontus Mountains
Poliochni
Troy
Lemnos
Mytilene
Lesbos
Pitane
Gryne
Myrine
Kyme
Chios
Smyrna
Ephesus
Pygela
Anaia/Priene
Amazoneion
Ankara
Hittites
Thermodon River
Lake Sevan
Halys
Asia Minor
Rhodes
● ancient cities founded by the Amazons
⊕ modern cities
Mediterranean
Cyprus

Map 6: Ancient cities founded by the Amazons in Asia Minor (Drawing after Gerhard Poellauer)

This can be explained by an interesting ancient myth, which says that the Greek hero, Jason, came to the island of Lemnos on his ship, Argo, together with his companions, the Argonauts, in his search for the magical "Golden Fleece." He was welcomed hospitably, but he only met women who were armed. In response to his question, they told him they had murdered their husbands because they had cheated on them. The women invited the Argonauts to have sex with them in order to get pregnant, until the Argonauts left again.[125]—This momentous motive of deception is certainly fantasy; it was the only way the Greeks could explain an island inhabited solely by women. The patriarchal moral is that, when women get hold of weapons, they first kill their husbands. The question is, though, who were these "husbands?"

One revealing passage in the myth says that "Thracian pirates" invaded and conquered the island.[126] We can assume these "pirates" were patriarchal sailors from the north of Greece (Thrace), who set out to conquer across the sea after the ancient cultures in the Balkans had already fallen victim to the invasions of patriarchal Indo-European tribes.[127]

These conquerors may have killed the native men and raped the women of Lemnos, forcing them into marriage, as was common patriarchal practice. But then the women apparently got rid of these “husbands” using the weapons of the latter. This took place under the leadership of courageous Hypsipyle, who afterwards became the “queen,” that is, the representative of the Lemnian women. After their victory, the armed women took the fate of the island culture into their own hands.[128] In order to solve the offspring problem, the Lemnian women used to entice passing seamen with hospitality and love, like the Argonauts had experienced under Jason.

Archaeologically, the fortress walls of Poliochni support the idea that the island was defended by women who became “Amazons” in this way. These have ←287 | 288→small arrow slits, which means the city was defended by bow and arrow. The fact that bows and arrows did not previously belong to this cultural area and that arrowheads were found exclusively on Lemnos is immensely important. It is obvious that women prefer the bow and arrow as a long-range weapon over direct close combat with men, thus they became a typical Amazon weapon. A large number of battleaxes have also been found, the other typical Amazon weapon.[129] Here we can see that women, in order to defend themselves, now took over what men had introduced into the world: weapons and the art of war.

This contingency represents the historical core of the Lemnos myth, on the basis of archaeological evidence.

First Emigration: From Lemnos to the Thermodon River

Among the ancient authors, the land most frequently mentioned as the home of the Amazons is “Themiskyra,” located on the rivers Iris and Thermodon, which lies in the north of Asia Minor on today’s Turkish Black Sea coast (see Map 6). Although the Pontic Mountains here come close to the seashore and make the area impassable, several rivers create advanced plains and deltas. It rains frequently, even in summer, making the climate mild and the narrow coastal plains very fertile in contrast to dry Central Anatolia. Herds of cattle and horses still inhabit this area today. This region was not a fantasy land for the ancient Greeks; they knew it very well as a result of its later colonization and the cities they founded along the Black Sea coast. Their most eastern sea-port city was Amisos (Turkish: “Samsun”), located right next to the land of the Amazons.

The question now arises of the connection between the Amazons of Lemnos and those of the Thermodon. Archaeological finds from the Palaeolithic period have been made in the Iris-Thermodon plain, and the Middle Stone Age was also represented here. However, finds from the Neolithic period are completely missing along the entire Turkish Black Sea coast.[130] It was not until the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium) that Bronze Age settlements developed here quite suddenly and without any previous stages, which strongly suggests that people ←288 | 289→immigrated, coming across the sea.[131] But where did they come from and why did they choose this remote area?

Let us look again at Lemnos. The Lemnians certainly did not stay put in their three cities; in fact, their island was already a naval power in the 4th millennium.[132] Its location in-between Asia and Europe, that is, between the West coast of Asia Minor and North Greece (Thrace), close to the Strait of the Dardanelles which links with the Sea of Marmara and then the Black Sea, is exposed and excellently suited for navigation in all directions. The Lemnian women, once they had founded their Amazon communities and went seafaring, knew not only the West coast of Asia Minor, but also its North coast along the Black Sea. The founding of numerous cities along these two coasts is attributed to the Amazons in Greek legends. No fewer than thirty cities were said to have stretched along the West coast of Asia Minor like pearls on a string from north to south, or occasionally along the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor (see Map 6).[133] When some later became Greek colonies, the cities of Kyme, Smyrna and Ephesus still had the image of Amazons as their founders on their coinage (Fig. 7).[134]

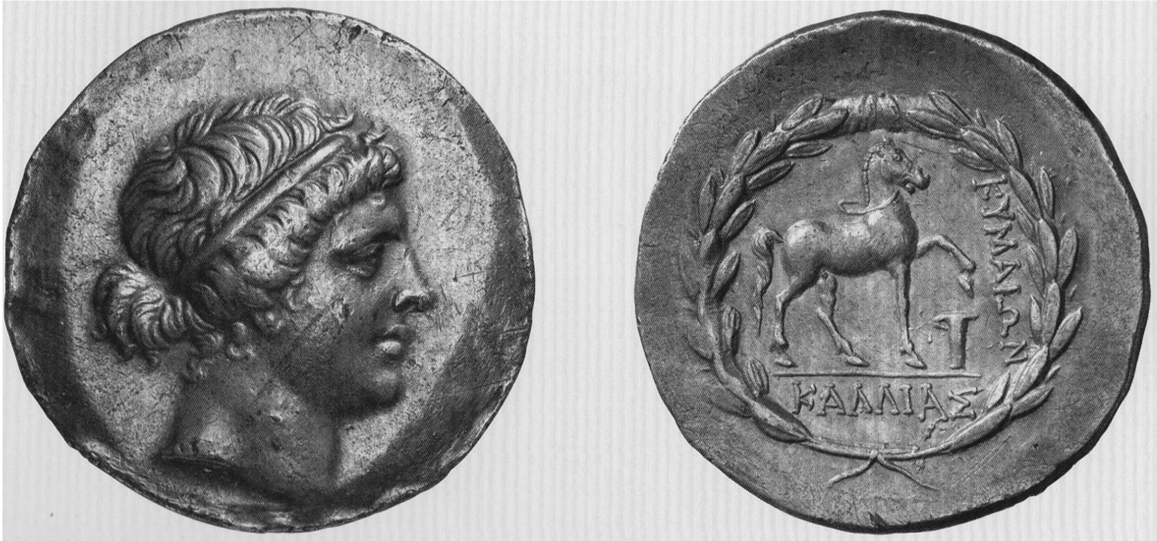


Fig. 7: Amazons as founders of cities depicted on coins of Asia Minor; on this example the Amazon Kyme and her horse, City of Kyme (Asia Minor, 2nd century BCE)

Of the ancient Greek city of Ephesus, the remains of the famous temple of Artemis still exist, which was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World in ancient times because of its size (6th-century Greek architecture). It is exactly here that the Amazons are said to have built a first open sanctuary for their tutelary goddess Artemis. She was venerated by the Amazons as the goddess of hunting with a bow and arrow, and, like them, she lived only with her female companions and was not overly fond of men. The founding of the Artemis Sanctuary in Ephesus suggests that the other cities founded by the Amazons also started out as sanctuaries, to which small accompanying settlements were added, later developing into cities. In such places the Amazons are said to have set up a statue of the goddess Artemis under a large oak tree where, to the shrill sound of ←289 | 290→pipes, stomping their feet, swinging their shields and rattling their quivers, they would circle the statue in wild dances.[135] In any case, it is striking that these cities are named after individual Amazonian women.

The central location of the island of Lemnos made early seafaring easy, but it became more dangerous in later times, for the island could be reached from all sides by enemies. The migrations of peoples in Thrace in

North Greece, in the northern Aegean Sea and in Asia Minor, triggered by the invasions of patriarchal Indo-Europeans, made it difficult for the Amazonian communities on Lemnos to cope, despite their intensive defense. Consequently, the Lemnian women finally decided to emigrate, and after their departure Lemnos remained uninhabited for a hundred years. They were looking for a second home in a remote, inaccessible area in order to be able to continue their traditional way of life. This was the region in the eastern corner of the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor, the Iris-Thermodon plain, which was surrounded by rugged, pathless mountains, but provided enough space for people and animals—a typical area of retreat. Here the Amazons are said to have founded three cities for their three tribes, which corresponded to the three cities on Lemnos; their Greek names are: Themiskyra, the capital, Lykastia and Chadesia. At the same time, they built up a powerful cavalry, because in all ancient sources they are described as outstanding riders ←290 | 291→(Fig. 8). In any case, this scenario would explain why Bronze Age settlements suddenly developed here in the 3rd millennium without any previous stages.[136]

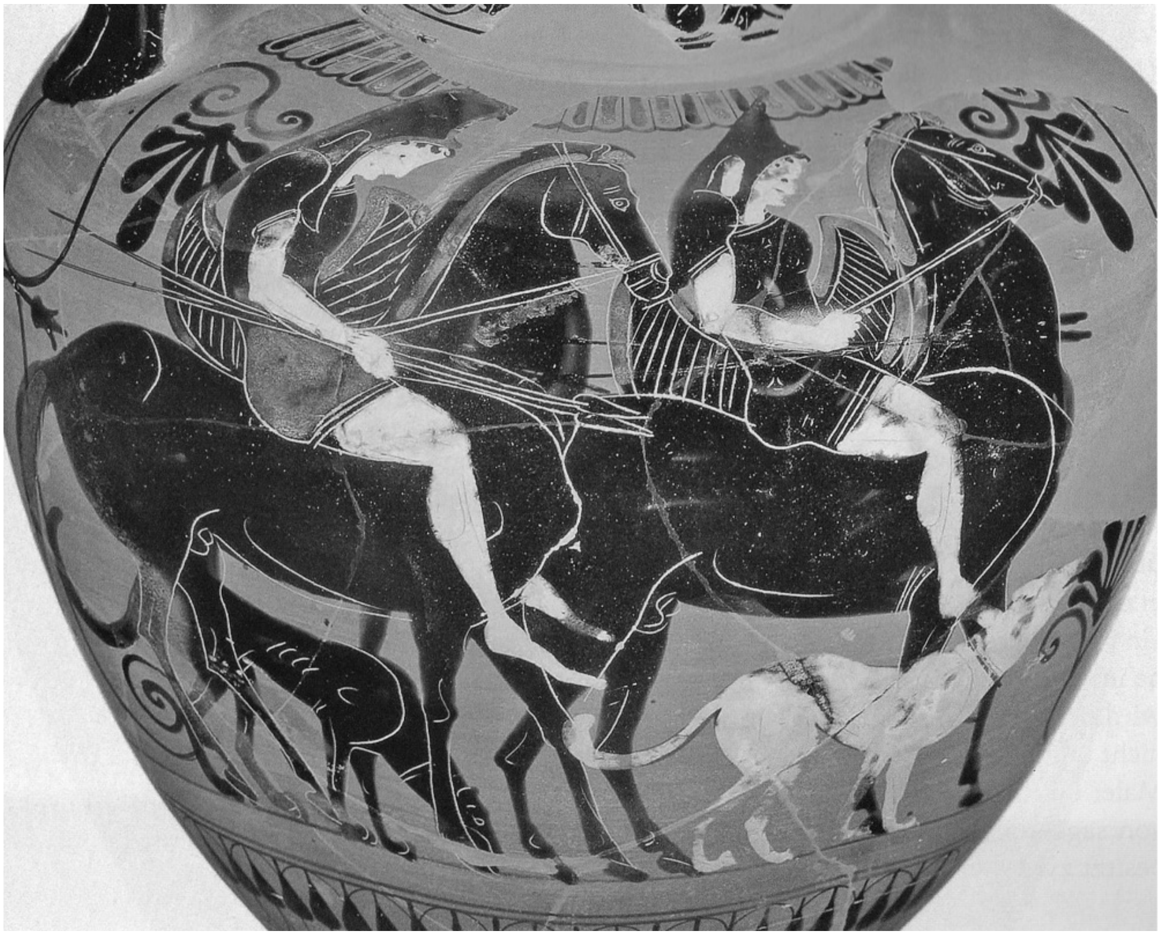
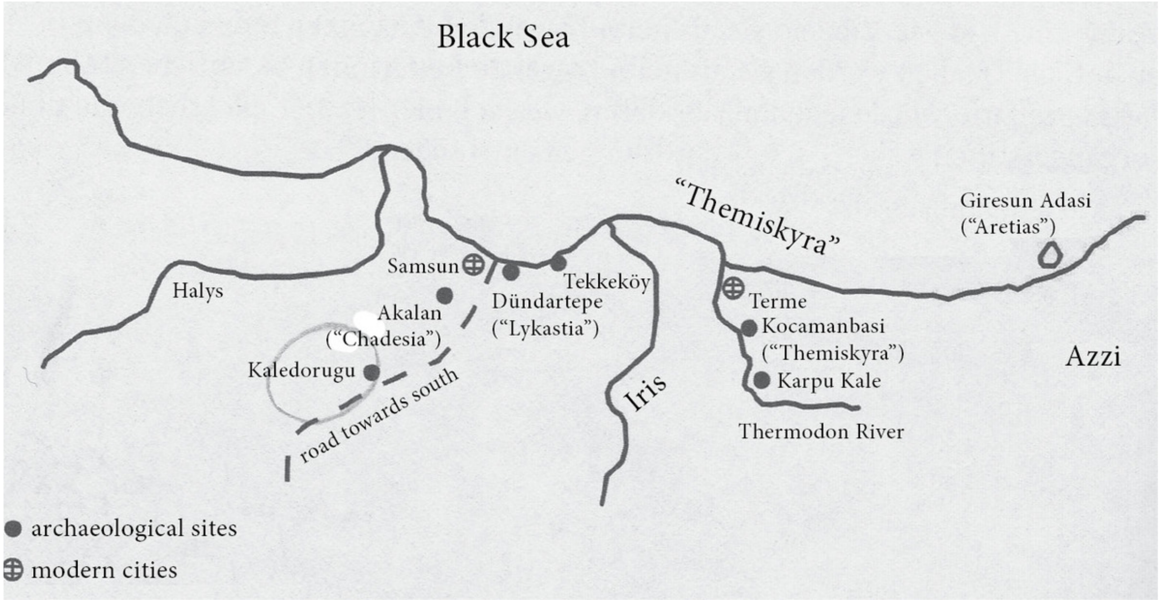


Fig. 8: Mounted Amazons with weapons and their typical, crescent-shaped “Pelta” shield. Attic vase painting (Greece, about 540–500 BCE)

Here, too, archaeology sheds light on the dark of mere assumptions. Unfortunately, in the region around the rivers Iris and Thermodon only a few, barely noticed archaeological studies have been carried out thus far, but these are all the more interesting. The hill of Dündartepe was excavated on the coast near the present-day town of Samsun, where the Iris-Thermodon plain begins. Here the Amazon city of Lykastia is assumed to have stood (Map 7 for all the places mentioned here).[137] The archaeologists unearthed a strange situation: on this residential hill (tell) there were two different Early Bronze Age cultures right next to each other; one on the top of the hill and the other further down the slope. The people on the top of the hill lived in wooden houses, and those on the slopes had houses made of mud brick, as was common in East and Central Anatolia. In the culture on the slopes, rough, unglazed pottery was found, whereas the culture on the top had high quality, finely glazed, glass-like ceramics with unusual shapes and rich decoration, similar to that of West Anatolia. A large number of spindle whorls and loom weights have also been discovered here, indicating a ←291 | 292→large amount of fabric production. In addition, the summit culture possessed a large number of metal objects, especially weapons. A fragment of a richly decorated female figure is particularly remarkable since it is unique in Asia Minor, but has parallels in Neolithic Southeast Europe and on the Greek islands. In the slope culture, on the other hand, a flat, violin-shaped female figure was excavated whose style is reminiscent of Central Anatolia.[138] A few kilometers east of Dündartepe, in Tekkeköy, the cemetery of Lykastia was found. The burial objects of pottery, jewelry and weapons show the same diversity of the two cultures like the city on the hill, although everyone has been buried in the same cemetery.[139] However, the impressive Early Bronze Age fortress of Lykastia, 2 km from the coast in a narrow pass, has thus far been ignored by archaeologists (at Tekkeköy). A system of steps carved into the rock leads up to the top, which provides an extensive view of the western part of the plain.[140]


Black Sea
"Themiskyra"
Giresun Adasi
("Aretias")
Samsun
Halys
Tekkeköy
Akalan
("Chadesia")
Dündartepe
("Lykastia")
Kaledorugu
road towards south
Iris
Terme
Kocamanbasi
("Themiskyra")
Karpu Kale
Thermodon River
Azzi
● archaeological sites
⊕ modern cities

Map 7: The region of Themiskyra with the cities of the Amazons (Drawing after Gerhard Poellauer)

←292 | 293→The second Amazon city of Chadesia is believed to be near the Early Bronze Age castle of Akalan a few kilometers southwest of Samsun. The top of the hill is surrounded by an imposing fortress made of a cyclopean wall 5 m high.[141] It is not the only fortress in the area. The hill of Kaledoruğu, further inland to the south, on the only road to Central Anatolia, also has such a structure, and the walls resemble those of Akalan. Here, obviously, the road was secured against enemies from the south, just as Akalan controlled access from the west. The archaeologists have excavated burials in Kaledoruğu which have the same duality of culture as in Lykastia.[142]

The capital of the Amazons, Themiskyra, was situated on the river Thermodon further east of Samsun and gave its name to the whole plain. Archaeologically, Themiskyra has not yet been found. Searches have been made near the present-day town of Terme close to the estuary into the Black Sea, but this appears to be the wrong location. According to ancient sources, Themiskyra lay further upstream at the first promontory. Such hills are, however, located 9 km south of Terme (near Kocamanbasi), and from the first hill the whole plain up to the Black Sea can be overlooked. The natural rock here shows signs of artificial processing; it has been smoothed and a large, vulva-shaped niche has been carved, as on Lemnos. Although the hill is heavily overgrown, on the top are numerous uniform blocks of stone, similar to the stonework of Kaledoruğu. In the upper reaches of the Thermodon, further south, near its source in the mountains, is another ruin of an imposing fortress, Karpu Kale, which has also not been archaeologically researched. Steps carved into the rock, typical of this area, lead to the upper platforms. Karpu Kale seems to have been a hidden refuge for Themiskyra, where people retreated at times of great danger.[143]

These results require explanations: firstly, for the two types of culture on the residential hills, secondly, for the numerous fortress structures. The fact that, in the 3rd millennium, it was Lemnian Amazons who came here and founded new settlements is indicated by the great similarity of the remains of fortress walls with their staircases, as well as the tools and ceramics found on the hilltops, with the finds made on the island of Lemnos. Apart from a certain difference in quality compared to the high culture of Poliochni, they are almost identical. Thus, the summit culture was that of the women: because of the wooden houses, artistic pottery, jewelry, weaving utensils, but especially because of the number of metal ←293 | 294→tools and weapons.[144] The many tools for making cloth are remarkable, for the Amazons were famous for their beautiful garments, as indicated by their original costume of long skirts with highly decorated hems (Fig. 9).

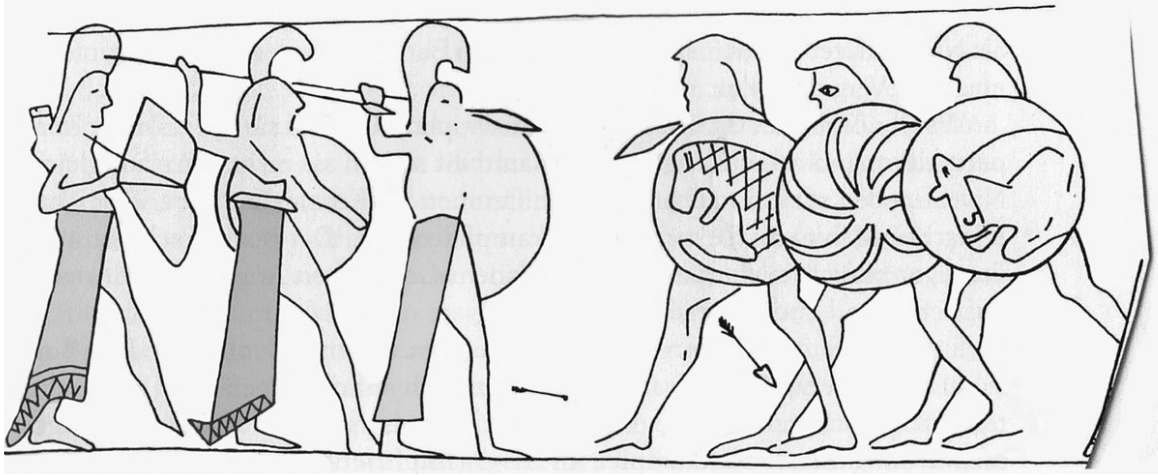


Fig. 9: Three Amazons (left) fighting three warriors (right). The Amazons are wearing their traditional costume: a long slit-skirt, richly adorned, leaving room for the legs. Corinthian drawing on a vessel (Greece, about 600 BCE) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

The Amazons did not find any previous population here, which is proved by the lack of settlement before the Early Bronze Age. However, they grouped together with another people who lived directly to the east, that is, with men from this neighboring people, in order to secure the desired offspring. These seem to have been the Azzi people who lived in Northeast Anatolia (see Map 7). The people of Azzi are mentioned in

Hittite sources and appear to have kept largely matriarchal patterns. It is even assumed that the name “Amazons” is derived from this, because “Am–Azzi” means “women people near the land of Azzi.”[145] On the other hand, the Greek derivation of “A–mazone” as “without breasts” is untenable, because Amazons have never been found to be depicted without breasts or with only one breast on any vase painting or sculpture. They always have two breasts and are depicted as very beautiful women (Fig. 10).[146]

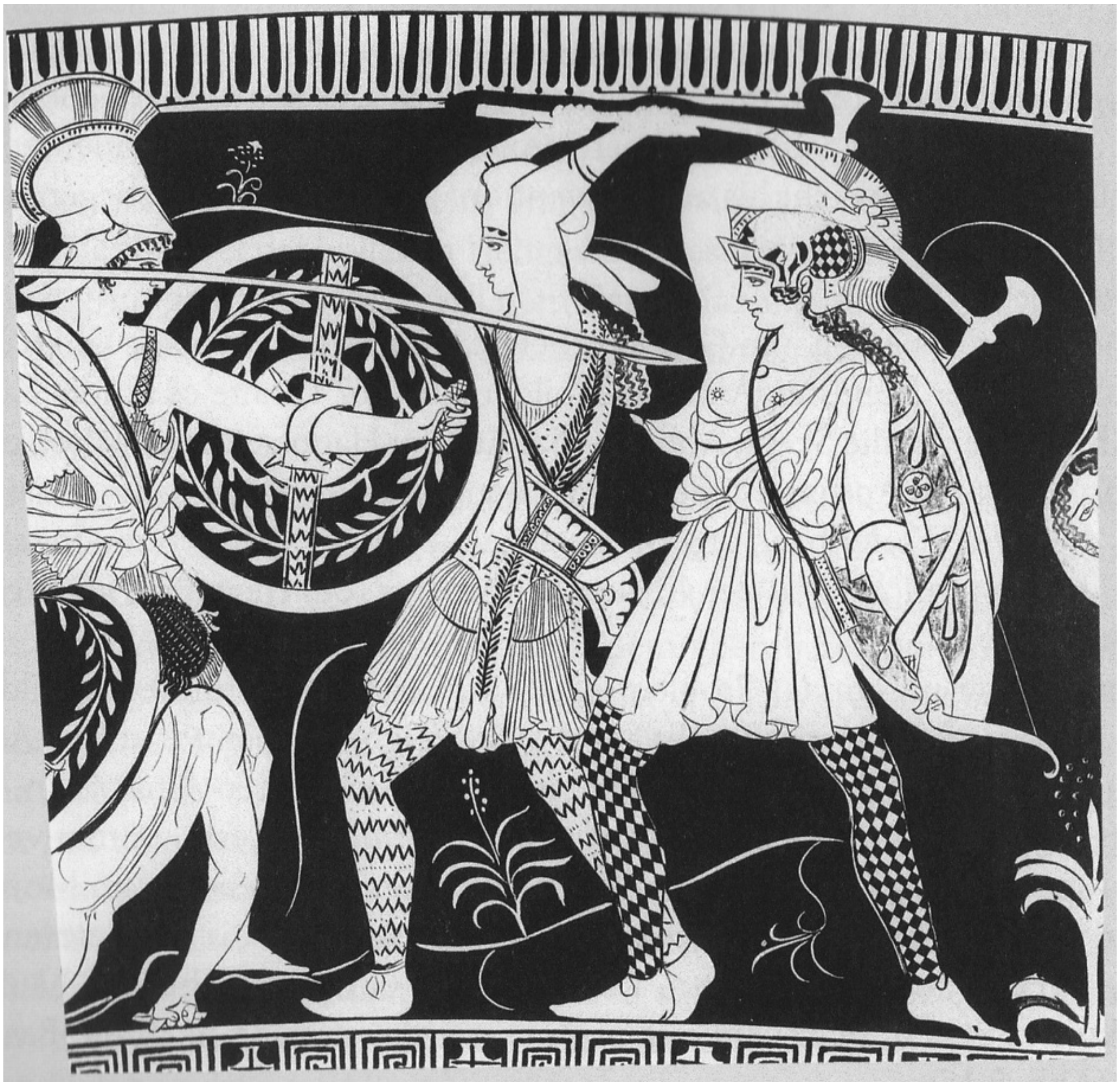


Fig. 10: Amazons are depicted as beautiful women, here armed with bows and the typical Amazon battle-axes. Attic vase painting (Greece,

←294 | 295→The amorous encounters between the Thermodon Amazons and the Azzi men were short and ritualized—as is usually reported by legends about the erotic encounters of Amazons with men. The aim was not romance but to produce children for the women's communities. In this respect, the small island of Aretias (Turkish: "Giresun Adasi") near the present-day city of Giresun is interesting. It is located east of the Thermodon Plain, right next to the Azzi country (see Map 7). According to Greek sources, this was the religious center for the Amazons, where they supposedly venerated the Greek war god Ares and sacrificed horses.[147] Hence the Greek name "Aretias," because the Greeks regarded the Amazons as "daughters of Ares." However, this is not plausible, because the Amazons would not have believed they originated from a male god, but from a goddess, embodied for them in a black, sacred stone, which they venerated.[148] In fact, such a stone is located on ←295 | 296→the island on a promontory high above the sea, the so-called "Hamza rock." It is round with parallel grooves that are traces of the ropes used to transport it here. It is surrounded by niches carved into the rock for small offerings. Even today it is still revered, because Turkish women go there and ask to be made fertile when they are childless. In addition, Turkish archaeologists discovered an elevated platform in the middle of the small island, like an open altar accessed by steps carved into the rock, and another round black stone nearby.[149] The veneration of black stones is typical in the cult of the age-old goddess of Asia Minor, who was later called Cybele. She embodied the land and, as the primordial mother, she was the giver of the wealth of offspring. The local folklore says that, on this island, the Amazons once got together with men from other tribes and, after offering sacrifices, had erotic encounters with them to become pregnant.[150] This sounds very likely, with these men being the ones from the neighboring country Azzi.

Some of the men then probably followed the Amazons into their cities and lived there, on the slopes of the residential hills. Here the typical clay architecture and simple pottery of their homeland, which they preserved, can be seen. In the long run, their number will have grown, boosted by the Amazons’ sons, because, in order to maintain an exclusively female society, the Amazons gave away their male children. According to most sources, they kept the girls and handed the boys over to the associated men,[151] since these did not live far away, namely in the hillside culture.

In spite of living on a single residential hill, the Amazons maintained the strict gender segregation. This segregation could be geographical, with the men living in a different tribe and place, or it could be social, with the men living in a different space in the same society. Here it is shown in the difference between the summit and slope cultures, and it also applies to separate areas of responsibility. The women practiced arts and crafts, such as weaving and pottery, forging their tools and weapons, and as skilled warriors they were the defenders of the city. The men, on the other hand, were craftsmen and traders and were probably the builders of the fortresses. This corresponds to the complementary, equivalent areas of responsibility in matriarchal societies, which are based on the complementary equality of the sexes—as the Lemnian women knew, given their origins. Therefore, those men can hardly be called the “enslaved gender,” as patriarchal ←296 | 297→Greek authors did. It is a patriarchal social norm that those who bear arms inevitably dominate and oppress the others, and this does not necessarily apply here.

Nevertheless, such Amazon societies were no longer completely matriarchal, but only had certain matriarchal features. They were more like female organizations for defense in generally difficult times. The most important difference is that classical matriarchies are not warlike societies. In times of need, they can become warlike, but this gradually undermines their traditional order from within.[152] This can be seen, in Amazon communities, in the disintegration of the matriarchal clan order, where the men, as brothers and sons, form part of the clans. This order no longer existed among the Amazons, although matriarchal features such as matrilinearity and matrilocality certainly prevailed. But without men these had become one-sided. Another matriarchal feature is the unrestricted love life, both for women and men, but with the Amazons it was changed by ritualistic restrictions. However, it can be assumed that same-sex love flourished among women, for which some evidence exists.[153]

Second Emigration: From the Thermodon to the Caucasus and to the Scythians

The fortresses with their cyclopean walls, which were shelters for the land of the Amazons, speak for themselves everywhere in the Iris-Thermodon region. Such fortresses had already been built on Lemnos against enemies, and they were all the more necessary towards the end of the 2nd millennium with its warlike conditions and migrations of many peoples.

Thus, in the year 1,200 BCE, a section of the Amazons fought under their Queen, Penthesilea, together with other defenders for the city of Troy in West Asia Minor against the attackers, the Greek Achaeans (see Map 6). The Amazons now wore Greek warrior costume and were armed with short swords and shields (Fig. 11). In these battles, Penthesilea was killed.[154] The Amazons had good reason to be hostile towards the patriarchal Achaeans, because they were also harassed by their attacks in their second homeland at the Thermodon. This tells ←297 | 298→ the legends of the Achaean heroes Heracles and Theseus, who visited the land of the Amazons from the sea and, despite the women’s hospitality, caused violent conflicts through ambushes and brought death (Bronze Age, around 1,300). The reason hardly was to steal the weapon belt of the Amazon Queen, Hippolyte, by Heracles—which she had wanted to give him as a sign of hospitality—, nor was it about the kidnapping of the Amazon Queen, Antiope, by Theseus—who had allegedly left her homeland and her people out of love for him.[155] The true historical core of these legends is that the Achaeans were interested in exploring this area for the purpose of conquest. Not only did they bring about the doom of the former naval power of Troy, but had already established an ever-growing warrior kingdom in the northwestern part of Asia Minor by the second half of the 2nd millennium.[156]

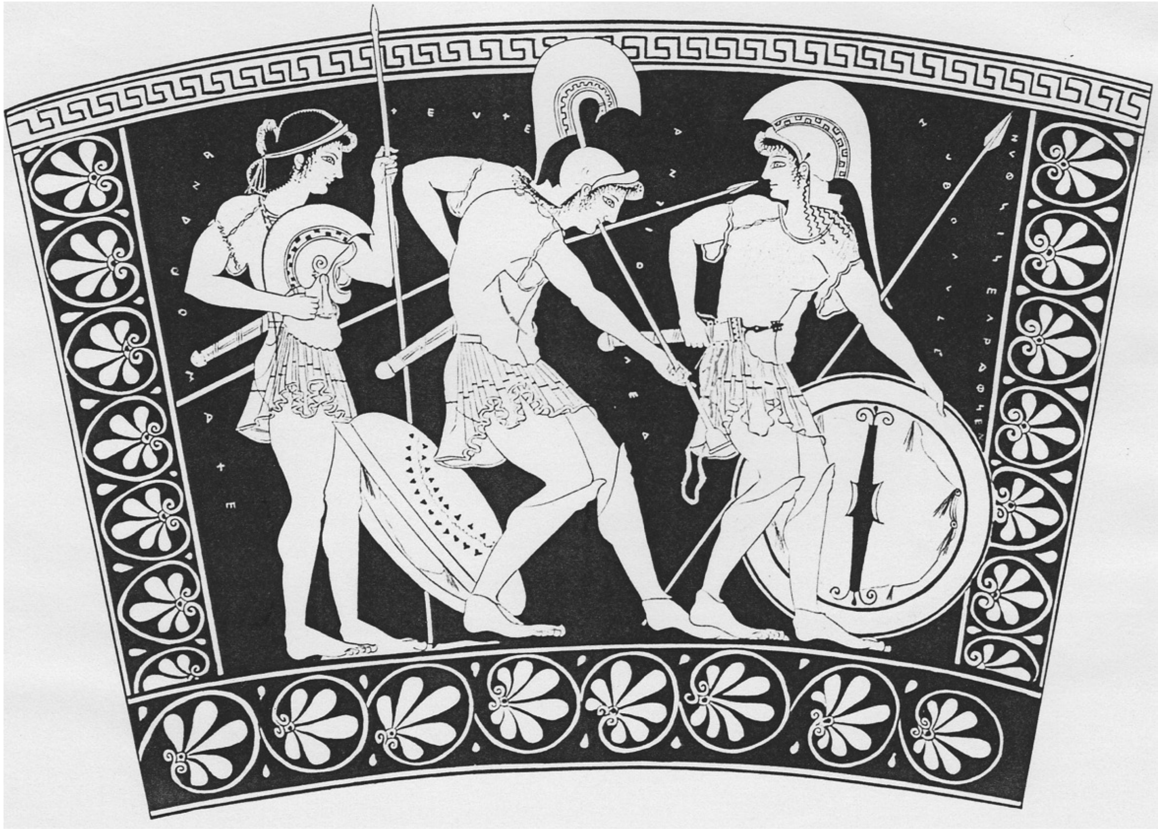


Fig. 11: Amazons in Greek costume and arming, preparing for a battle. Attic vase painting (Greece, about 540–500 BCE)

However, there was a threat not only from enemies from the west, but also from the south. Here, the Indo-European Hittites had settled in the bend of the river Halys in Central Anatolia (see Map 6). In an unprecedentedly destructive invasion they had invaded Asia Minor from the steppe north of the Caucasus, ←298 | 299→leaving behind a trail of destruction from the northeast. In Central Anatolia they came across the Hatti, the already mentioned people with a matriarchal high culture, whom they subjugated brutally. Since these invaders were relatively poor in culture, the Hittites, in their Old Empire, took over large parts of this earlier culture. The Tawananna, Queen of the Hatti, and her council of elders still had great influence. But now patrilinearity was introduced, and, after an uprising of the Hatti against a later Hittite king, the Council of “Old Women and Men” was replaced by Indo-European nobles and the Tawananna lost her power. In that way, the matriarchal order was finally overthrown and patriarchal patterns were implanted in the Hittite Empire.[157]

The Amazons in the Iris-Thermodon area also had to deal with these enemies from the south. From time to time, the Hittites penetrated the north of Asia Minor to eliminate enemies at their borders. Once a Hittite king extended his empire to the Black Sea, but his influence was short-lived.[158] Nevertheless, this explains why the Amazons built two fortresses (Akalan and Kaledoruğu) on the access road toward the south to Central Anatolia. Another consequence was that they withdrew more into the secluded eastern part of the Iris-Thermodon plain, to Themiskyra on the Thermodon River, where they could better defend themselves. Here they are said to have lived completely without men in order to protect themselves.

Their communities, however, were not only beset from two sides, west and south, but also from northeastern enemies coming into the country. Around 1,400 BCE the Hittite annals tell of an unpredictable adversary, the Kaškaeans, who invaded Asia Minor as semi-nomads from the northeast and settled on the northern border of the Hittite Empire. Independent, mobile tribes, they invaded the Hittite Empire time and again, conquered some cities and even burned down the capital once. They were also a permanent threat to the Amazons, for the Kaškaeans advanced as far as the Black Sea coast and occupied their land. The Amazons courageously fought against the invaders in order to preserve their independence, the hidden fortress Karpu Kale serving as an important refuge. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that they survived the multiple invasions of Asia Minor in the Iron Age, in which the Hittite Empire and other empires also perished.[159]

←299 | 300→

However, the Amazon communities did not disappear completely. Given the dangers of the second half of the 2nd millennium, groups of Amazons appear to have emigrated from the Thermodon to the Caucasus on the eastern border of the Black Sea. It is plausible that the constant threat of neighboring patriarchal peoples forced them to leave their homeland and thereby avoid their immediate downfall.

Archaeological finds show that, at that time, cultural centers emerged both south and north of the Caucasus that resembled the culture of the Thermodon. In the landscape south of the Caucasus, at the easternmost corner of the Black Sea, which was called “Colchis” by the ancient Greek, there existed an independent culture created by the Thermodon Amazons (see Map 6). This is the scene for the myth of Medea, who is said to have followed Jason the Argonaut out of love, but became unhappy and took back her independence under dramatic circumstances.[160] Emigration to Armenia, south of the Caucasus, is also conceivable, because several fortifications with cyclopean walls have been found near Lake Sevan, as well as the typical Amazon axes with crescent-shaped blades (see Map 6).[161]

Another ancient Greek tradition is that the Amazons of the Thermodon River also settled on the northern slope of the Caucasus and north of the Black Sea.[162] This shows that they emigrated not only by land, but also by sea. A Greek legend reports that, after a battle with the Achaeans, a large group of captured Thermodon Amazons was deported on the ships. Nevertheless, they were able to free themselves and kill their guards, but were then exposed to the wind and waves and were driven to the north coast of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov. It was the land of the Scythians, patriarchal Indo-Europeans with an Indo-Iranian language, who, in the 1st millennium (Iron Age), dominated, as equestrian nomads, the steppes from Central Asia to the Black Sea. They developed an extremely warlike and hierarchical society, as can be seen from the “pyramids of the steppe,” the immense kurgans, ostentatious tombs for their kings, containing magnificent hoards of gold.[163] After having arrived there, the Amazons stole a herd of horses and used these to battle fiercely against the Scythians. When these realized that women were fighting against them, they decided it was better for the young ←300 | 301→Scythians to offer them love instead of battles and produce strong children. But the Amazons refused, stating that they could not live like the Scythian women, who spent their lives on the wagons occupied with female work and did not hunt or go anywhere, not even ride or fight! In love, the young Scythians agreed to take their legacy and follow the Amazons to wherever they wanted to settle. They moved together to the area east of the Don and founded a new people, the Sarmatians (Sauromatians). It is still said that, in the Sarmatians, the women maintained their old, free way of life, rode with the men on the hunt and to war and wore the same clothes as the men.[164] This men’s clothing is the Scythian trouser suit which they are shown wearing in later Greek vase paintings (Fig. 12).[165]

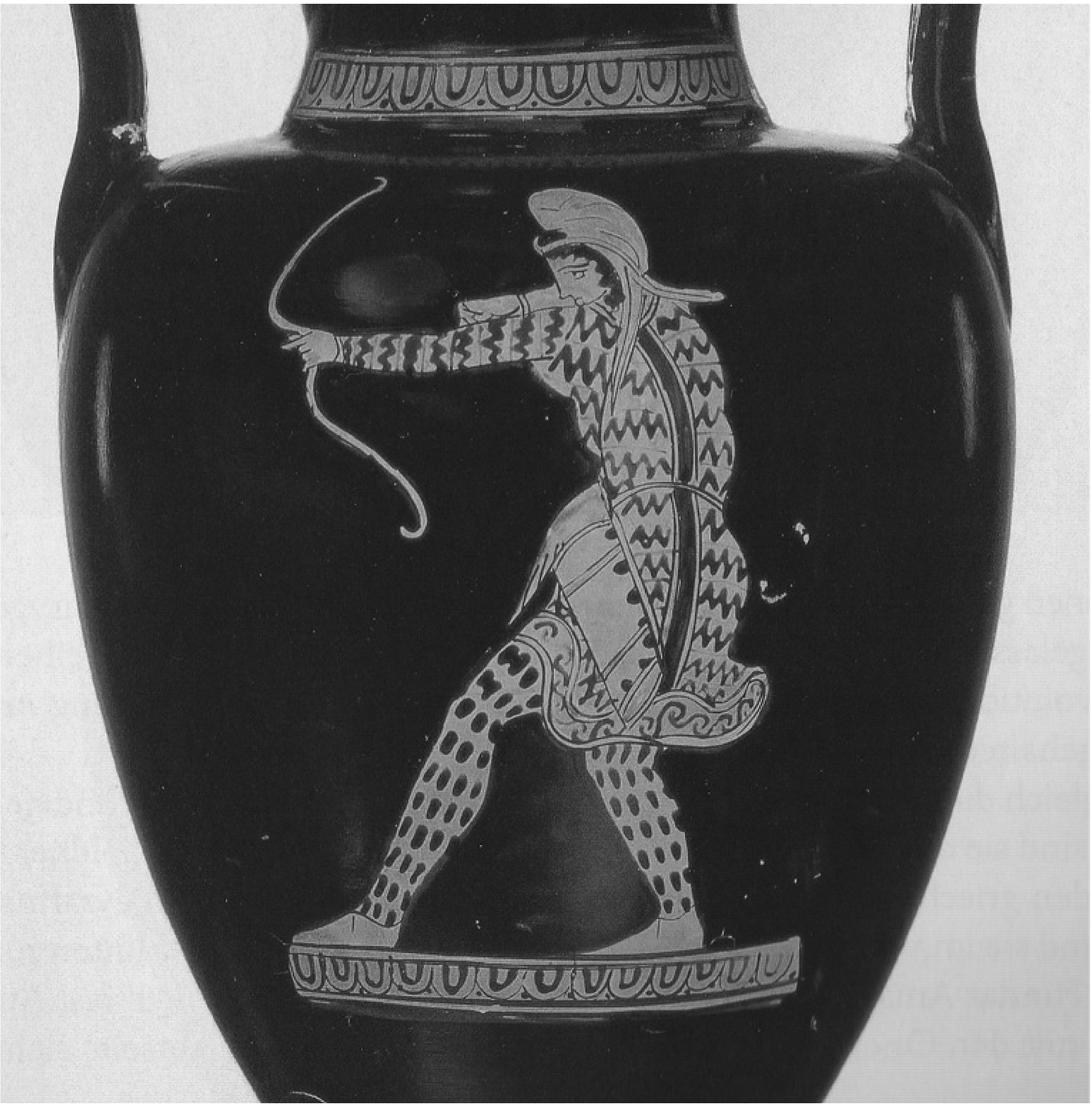


Fig. 12: Amazon in Scythian costume drawing her bow. Attic vase painting (Greece, about 430 BCE)

The historical core of this legend is the flight of the Amazons also northwards, across the Black Sea, where they joined with the Scythians, adopted a nomadic lifestyle and became merged within the Sarmatian people. The Sarmatians developed a mixed culture of Scythian and Amazonian elements, the position of the Sarmatian women differing considerably from that of the Scythian women. As the Amazons clearly express in the legend, the Scythian women had no freedom ←301 | 302→like theirs, but led a confined, sedentary way of life with the small children and household tasks on the covered wagons, which were their permanent residence.[166] They acted as the men’s servants and had no particular social value, which can be seen from the evidence: in Scythian pictorial art almost only men appear, and the archaeological finds show no symbols of prestige in the graves of women. If they were wives of kings, they had to follow their masters in death.[167]

This lies in sharp contrast to the life of women in the Sarmatians. They kept their freedom, and they rode and fought as before. Boys and girls were brought up like equals and trained for fighting. Men and women had free choice in matters of love, and it was considered honorable to have as many male or female lovers as possible.[168] Society was relatively balanced in terms of gender. But there was no longer the gender segregation that was typical for the Amazon communities. The women therefore no longer fought independently and did not set up independent combat units, but were now part of the tribe and fought together with the men as warrior women. Moreover, not all women were warriors.

The archaeological finds indicate this. The vast area covered by the Sarmatians, who had no permanent homes, stretched from the Don to the Urals and North Caucasus (see Map 5). Here are numerous graves of warrior women buried with the “mixed inventory” of female tools, jewelry and weapons under kurgans.[169] Arrows dominate the weapons, but swords, daggers, spears, shields, armor and weapon belts have also been found. The skeletons show traces of the battles in which the women had taken part.[170] Most of these graves are located in the northern Black Sea area, but also north of the Caucasus. They most frequently appear by the Sea of

Azov and the Don, the areas where the Amazons at first settled with the Scythian men. In South Ukraine alone about 130 graves of warrior women have been found (1st millennium, 5th and 4th centuries).[171]

However, the proportion of these warrior women’s graves is small compared to the men’s graves and graves of other women in the cemeteries. They never ←302 | 303→ appear in the majority there, but are in the minority.[172] Even if we add a large number of undetected cases, because many female warrior graves were not recognized as such in the past, the share of female warrior graves does not exceed 20% of all female burials.[173] This makes it obvious that only a limited number of Sarmatian women took up arms. In the men’s graves, which predominate in number, weapons have been found in almost all of them. This means that war in the Sarmatians—as in the Scythians—was undertaken by men, and that women only joined in the men’s battles and, although they were honored, remained subordinated there. We see here that the independence of the Sarmatian women was only relative, because they depended on the men succeeding at war. This no longer corresponds to the warfare of the Amazons, which consisted exclusively of women who decided their own strategy and fought their own battles in complete independence. Most Sarmatian women seem to have devoted themselves solely to female activities, as can be seen from the grave goods, which contained only jewelry.[174]

Here the difference between “Amazon” and “Warrior woman” becomes very obvious. Therefore, it only causes confusion when every warrior woman of early history is called an “Amazon” in all places, or when, conversely, the very existence of the Amazons is refuted because of the dependent situation of the Sarmatian warrior women.[175]

Warrior women existed not only with the Sarmatians, but also with many other peoples of the Eurasian Steppe from Hungary to Central Asia and North China, not being unusual in this vast area. They were immortalized in legends and songs across the entire Eurasian steppe region, and archaeologists have found their burial places scattered throughout its vastness. It is said that they took part in the battles and often helped the men to victory. Their social status was very different: some of them became so powerful that they successfully led an army as queens of war.[176] More often, they were the wives of kings and also fought in the wars and supported their men. Or they became successors to their royal fathers if there was no other heir capable of warfare. Or they took over the government and the fight when the royal husband had become a drunkard.[177] All of them were not independent women, but acted in more or less patriarchal contexts. As royal women they remained exceptions, but the same is valid for their sisters of lesser rank, who served kings and emperors in armies, something which earned them no gratitude.[178] Such women no longer posed a threat to their respective patriarchal societies as did the earlier Amazons.

←303 | 304→

The strangest example is a young warrior woman of Pazyryk in the Altai Mountains (see Map 4). This 17-year-old was found buried with her weapons in a magnificent tomb, which contained not only rich grave goods but also nine sacrificed horses. This was not an individual burial, however: the very young woman lay side by side with her father, an old man suffering from a severe bone disease. He had been a mighty chieftain of the Scythians, and the furnishings of the tomb were meant for him, not her. Since he could hardly move anymore, she had been his protectress during his lifetime, trained in the art of war. She therefore had to follow him in death to protect him also in the afterlife.[179] Here we see the warrior woman-daughter as a human sacrifice for a ruling man—it is the absolute opposite of what the Amazons used to be.

The warrior women of nomadic tribes in the Eurasian Steppe did not result from somehow “matriarchal” patterns of these peoples. Such isolated heroines, be they queens or nameless women who temporarily enjoyed privileges, do not constitute a matriarchal society. On principle, they lived in patriarchal societies. However, these exceptions were based on the general defensiveness of women among the Eurasian nomadic tribes, the reason for which is the way of life of these peoples. In Bronze Age and even more so in Iron Age with the escalating and incessant wars, men were often absent from the camps. This would have exposed the women, who remained in the camps with the children on the wagons and with the herds, to every enemy raid if they had not known how to defend themselves. That is probably the real reason why boys and girls alike were raised to fight. The most courageous young women then developed into warrior women, ←304 | 305→and their most important task was to protect the female part of the tribe in the camps while the men were away. In an attack, they led the women, who defended themselves vehemently—a fact which the later Celtic and Germanic women also achieved, to the astonishment of the Romans. Only in great danger did these protectresses then also become fellow combatants in the male armies and, in rare exceptional cases, war queens—which in turn astonished the Greeks and Persians, who were not accustomed to such women. This is how the legends about "Amazons" came about in many places, although these women were no longer Amazons.

From this brief argumentation it is clear that the time has come to clarify the terminology of the subject of "Amazons" and to further archaeological research into the matter, rather than denying it under the pretext of "myth."—

Finally, let us summarize the results of this chapter.

- *Climatic fluctuations* played a decisive role in the development of steppe cultures, since they had a drastic effect in the last 5,000 years due to the sensitivity of steppe to desiccation. This created mayor challenges for the people living on the steppe, shaping their history.
- At the economic level: Since agriculture was no longer possible, *herder cultures with domestication of the horse* arose in order to control large herds. Because of the permanent conflict between neighboring herder cultures for the scarce pasture, *herder warrior cultures* developed. The invention of the wheel and wagon, in other cultures used for peaceful purposes, increased their mobility, thus they continued to spread into the steppe as semi-nomads and attacked neighboring sedentary matriarchal cultures. Due to the increasing desiccation of the steppes, finally, full *nomadism* of the herder warrior cultures arose. After the *invention of the*

chariot in this region, they extended over the entire Eurasian Steppe. Every technique previously used for peaceful purposes was now transformed into *a technique of war*.

- At the social level: The herder warrior cultures of the steppe developed the characteristic patterns of *early patriarchy:* permanent armed conflict led to the emergence of *chieftainship with warrior elites,* that means, to the formation of the *first patterns of domination.* With their new power, the chieftains were able to overrule common rules of ownership, that is, to acquire *cattle as private property*. Furthermore, they replaced the matriarchal-egalitarian social form with a *hierarchical society. Women* were also made *the property of the ruling men,* their purpose being to bear the ←305 | 306→*legitimate sons* of the chief as the heirs to his property. Therefore, women had to live strictly *monogamously,* from which the *patrilineal and patrilocal society* with father right developed (Indo-Europeans). "Father right" meant having *power over the life and death* of women and children. In death, the wife or wives and children were also placed in the chief's grave, which means, *human sacrifices* were practiced.
- At the level of culture and religion: A *hierarchical dualism* prevailed in thought, which came from the *rights of the strongest*. The basis for this is the *dualism of the sexes,* which manifests itself in the Indo-European *ideology of purity*. The "strong" and "pure" men are set against the "weak" and "impure" women, whereby the status of the "impurity" of women is seen as naturally given. The economy was also divided into two according to this dualism: women did the "low, impure" work (agriculture), while men's work was regarded as the "higher and noble" work (herding and warfare). The same hierarchical dualism is evident in the deities. The men's gods were *father-gods in the sky and war-gods,* and regarded as the "higher" deities. Their myths, however, do not reflect divine attitudes, but human ones of power, competing and supplanting rivals. The *goddesses* of women have to do with *birth and death* and are regarded as the "lower" deities. They stand for general aspects of life and are *remnants from the matriarchal religious tradition.*

Definition 1

Early patriarchy developed from the outset as a combination of *war, establishment of elites and domination, private property of cattle, rule over women and subjugated cultures,* associated with *superior male deities of sky and war.*

- Resistance to this development: The *Amazon societies* in the East Mediterranean region and the Black Sea area represent a form of resistance against these new patriarchal conditions. Since ancient historiography, these cultures have been much distorted by prejudice and often denied.
- Amazons must not be confused with warrior women or defensive women, as frequently happens. Warrior women lived in different cultures; there exists much evidence for them in myths and archaeological finds especially in the Eurasian steppes. They fought together with the men in a society dominated by men.
- ←306 | 307→Amazons, on the other hand, are a different phenomenon: they formed *warrior women's communities made up exclusively of women.* They managed to assert their independence for another millennium thanks to their fighting spirit and skills. Recent archaeological research and finds indicate the existence of such purely female Amazon societies.

Definition 2

Amazons are not women who fought in men's war formations, but are independent warrior women. They established *warrior women's communities made up exclusively of women.* Amazon societies still have some matriarchal features, but are not longer complete matriarchies.

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[1] Concept from Ian Morris.

[2] On the history of the steppe peoples see Burchard Brentjes: *Die Ahnen Dschingis-Chans*, Berlin 1988, VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

3 For example the Džejtun culture, 7th-5th millennium, Parzinger: *Die Kinder des Prometheus*, 427 f.

4 Op. cit., 438–441. Also Hermann Parzinger: *Die frühen Völker Eurasiens*, Munich 2006, Beck Verlag, 142 f. Brentjes, 36–37.

5 Kelteminar culture, 7th-4th millennium; Parzinger: *Die Kinder*, 448–449.

6 Seroglasov culture, early 7th millennium; Op. cit., 388.

7 Rakušečni-Jar and Sursk cultures, mid 7th millennium; Ibid.

8 Op. cit., 384–385; David W. Anthony: *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language. How Bronze Age Riders from the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World*, Princeton & Oxford 2007, Princeton University, 149–154.

9 Parzinger: *Die Kinder*, 385–386; Anthony, 175–177.

10 Anthony, 174.

11 Brentjes, 37.

12 Anthony, 216–218.

13 The supply of horse meat has been archaeologically proven by the high proportion of horse bones compared to those of other domestic animals, representing 80%–90%.

14 Parzinger: *Die Kinder*, 414–416.

15 Anthony, 248,

16 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 353.

17 Op. cit., 356; Anthony, 182–186. “Kurgans” are individual tombs of a certain shape, in which high-status men were buried, in contrast to the collective hill graves of matriarchal cultures.

18 On this short duration of feuds and male leadership see, for example, the Iroquois, in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 14.

19 For example, the men of the Tuareg peoples have also been herder warriors, because of the extreme situation in the Sahara Desert in which this society was situated. But their inner social order remained matriarchal. See Op. cit., Chapter 18.

20 See the concepts of “charismatic leader” and “staff of enforcement” by Christian Sigrist: *Regulierte Anarchie. Untersuchungen zum Fehlen und zur Entstehung politischer Herrschaft in segmentären Gesellschaften Afrikas*, Frankfurt/Main 1979, Verlag Syndikat.

21 In contemporary cattle breeding societies in East Africa, livestock is common property, and it is not possible to divert private property. The men watch out for this among each other, and there are rigorous social rules to prevent it. The reason is that no enforcement staff is held by any single man here. See Ibid.

22 Anthony, 461.

23 Sigrist, 56, against a thesis by Friedrich Engels.

24 Anthony, 222; Parzinger: *Die Kinder*, 391.

25 According to Gimbutas it is Sredni Stog II, see *Civilization*, 356–357; Anthony, 216.

26 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 361.

27 Op. cit., 244–245.

28 This grey pottery is a peculiar, very early development of the Mesolithic forest steppe cultures in Northeast and Northwest Asia (from 7th millennium onwards). It was unpainted, decorated with prints of fingernails and strings and only weakly fired, because it was made over an open fire and not in a kiln. This is in evident contrast to the extremely artistic, painted ceramics of Anatolia and Southeast Europe. See Anthony, 149.

29 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 361.

30 Anthony, 247.

31 These open groups of herder warriors were by no means organized mounted troops, as has often mistakenly attributed. Mounted troops or cavalry only occurred in the Iron Age (around 1,000).

32 Harald Haarmann: *On the Trail of the Indoeuropeans. From Neolithic Steppe Nomads to Early Civilizations*, Wiesbaden 2020, Marix Verlag, German edition: *Die Indoeruopäer,* 93.

33 These fortified settlements are situated in the border zone of the Tripolje culture and are just 10% of the complete culture.

34 Anthony, 230–231.

35 Op. cit., 279–281.

36 The western part of the Cucuteni-Tripolje culture was a center for copper mining in the Balkan Carpathians, for a long time the leader in copper metallurgy. The double name originated because its western part was near Cucuteni in Romania and its eastern part was near Tripolje near Kiev (Ukraine); however, it did not reach the banks of the Black Sea.

37 Parzinger: *Die Kinder,* 391; Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 361.

38 Parzinger: Op. cit., 423.

39 Op. cit., 391.

40 I prefer the term “early Indo-Europeans” to terms such as “proto-Indo-Europeans.”

41 Anthony, Chapter 5; J. P. Mallory: *In Search of the Indo-Europeans. Language, Archaeology and Myth*, London 1989, Thames and Hudson.

42 Anthony, 66.

43 Stefan Burmeister: “Räderwerk,” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten*, 404–410.

44 For example, the disc wheels of Horgen near Zurich (3,200), of Laibacher Moor in Slovenia (around 3,100), near Bad Schussenried in Germany (around 2,900). Burmeister, Ibid.; Anton Velušček: “Schatzkammer Pfahlbauten,” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten,* 108; Anton Velušček: “Jungsteinzeitliche Verkehrstechnik,” in: *Pfahlbauten*, 75. Photos of a wheel and plank path in: *Archäologie und Naturschutz im Federseemoor,* eds. Schlichtherle and Strobel, Landesdenkmalamt Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart 1999, DB-Verlag.

45 For example, the wagon grave at the Kuban river north of the Caucasus (about 3,320), the wagon grave at the lower Dnieper (about 3,330). See Anthony, 69–71, and his map, 74.

46 Op. cit., 133.

47 This is shown by the cemeteries near the villages of the Andronovo culture (around 1,700), where mostly only the remains of women and children were found. This is later in time, but the circumstances were probably similar before. See Brentjes, 73.

48 Anthony, 319–323.

49 Op. cit., 300–305. On the waves of invasion in Europe by the Indo-European herder warriors, who came from the eastern Steppe, and the consequences, see Chapter 7 of the book in hand.

50 Op. cit., 461–462.

51 Parzinger: *Die Kinder,* 395.

52 Anthony, 348.

53 Op. cit., 349–351, 359.

54 This makes it evident that it was not starving societies attacking other cultures in these millennia, because starving people are not in any position to do so. This speaks against James DeMeo’s too simple thesis of hunger, which is alleged to lead to violence and patriarchy. Patriarchy always implies violence, but mere violence as a syndrome of hunger does not lead to patriarchy as a new social form. Although the repeated deterioration in

the climate threatened their livelihoods (not just once in the 4th millennium, as DeMeo had assumed), these societies with warrior elites are inventive and well-organized, and can assert themselves with increasing brutality against other cultures. See James DeMeo: *Saharasia: The 4000 BCE Origins of Child Abuse, Sex-Repression, Warfare and Social Violence in the Deserts of the Old World,* Greensprings, Oregon 1998, Orgone Biophysical Research Lab.

55 Patriarchal ideology is expressed by such statements as: “War is the father of all things” (Greek philosopher Heraklit) and “All power comes from guns” (Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong).

56 Anthony, 125.

57 Op. cit., 300–301.

58 On the archaeological finds of covered wagons, see Op. cit., 71.

59 Op. cit., 325.

60 Jeannine Davis-Kimball: “Nomads and Patriarchy,” in: Cristina Biaggi (ed.): *The Rule of Mars. Readings on the Origins, History and Impact of Patriarchy,* Manchester CT, USA, 2005, Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, 138.

61 See Chapter 7 of the book in hand.

62 Anthony, 390.

63 Op. cit., 391.

64 The example of the invention of the wheel and wagon shows that, in matriarchal societies, the use of technology was directed towards peaceful use, both sacred and profane. But then, when the first patterns of domination were established, this and every other type of technique was used for the purpose of war. The aim was to achieve ever greater power over others and over nature. Consequently, such patterns of domination and their associated attitudes are a precondition for the misuse of technology, but technology is not a precondition for patriarchy. Only with the expansion of patriarchy were new techniques for warfare continually invented.

65 Anthony, 372; Parzinger: *Die Kinder,* 418–420.

66 This Bronze Age development, however, only applied to the steppe belt, because in the forests of Siberia the Mesolithic, egalitarian way of life remained unaffected among the various peoples. Parzinger: Op. cit., 423–433.

67 Anthony, 428 f., 437 f., 448 f.; Haarmann: *On the Trail of Indo-Europeans,* German edition: *Die Indoeuropäer,* 102–104.

68 Predecessors of this eastward expansion were the peoples of the Early Yamnaya culture who migrated to the central Asian Altai Mountains, where they settled (Afanasievo culture, 3,400–2,400). See Anthony, 307–309.

69 Brentjes: *Die Ahnen Dschingis-Chans*.

70 Anthony, 412 f.

71 The key notions of kinship emphasize the male line and clan. See Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 395; Haarmann: *On the Trail of Indo-Europeans,* German edition: *Die Indoeuropäer,* 77–79.

72 This applies to the traditional culture of the Tuareg peoples, which is now disintegrating. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies,* Chapter 18.

73 If biological paternity is known in such ethnic communities, this is not normally an old tradition. For only those using the monogamous form of marriage can know the biological paternity, and these are actually rare. In such cases, the monogamous form of marriage was due to recent alienation as a result of patriarchal colonization from different origins, especially through Christian and other religions’ missionary work.

74 Linguistic references also exist for the Indo-European custom of the “bride price,” because the word for this derives from “wedh” (English: “wedding”), which means “to lead cattle.” See Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 395.

75 Both variants occurred and are known among Indo-European peoples: the “bride price” was paid by Indo-Iranian tribes until the custom of the dowry developed later in India, which is still used there today; among the Celtic, Germanic and Slavic tribes the dowry existed without the custom of the “bride price.”

76 The old Irish “Aitheda” or “flight stories” reveal these customs, which are about the love of a chieftain’s wife or queen for another man, with whom she fled. This regularly ends with the death of both of them by the chieftain or king. See examples in Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros.*

77 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 395. These early patriarchal patterns were still valid in classical patriarchal societies and in some places have survived to the present day. For example, the power of the father (“potestas”) is well documented with the “pater familias” (“family father”) in the ancient Roman Empire, who held the same legal degree of power over the life and death of his women, children, slaves and cattle.

78 Simultaneous burials of man and woman (Suvorovo Culture and Baden Culture near Budapest); simultaneous burial of a man with women and children who had been laid in a circle around him (Baden Culture, Bronocice Culture, South Poland); simultaneous burial of a man with two women and their small children, together with two youths and a servant (Globular Amphora Culture, Volhynia); see Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 362, 374, 375, 382.

79 Hermann Parzinger: “Die Reiternomaden der eurasischen Steppe während der Skythenzeit,” Exhibition catalog: *Im Zeichen des goldenen Greifen. Königsgräber der Skythen*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (ed.): Munich and Berlin 2007/2008, Prestel Verlag, 36.

80 “Kafirs” is a negative foreign term and means “unbeliever.”

81 “Aryans” (English) or “Arier” (German) means “the nobles.” This term was taken to the extreme in the racial theory of the Nazi regime, where all Indo-Europeans were called “Arier” and were supposed to represent a higher human type. In linguistics, it refers merely to a certain group of Indo-Europeans with an Indo-Aryan language (Vedic Sanskrit), who appeared as the conquerors of northwest India around 2,000. We use this term here in the latter sense.

82 On the history of the Kalash Kafirs: Jean-Yves Loude and Viviane Lièvre: *Kalash Solstice*, Islamabad, Pakistan, Lok Virsa Publishing, 11–25.

83 Op. cit., 21–22.

84 On the fundamentally dualistic ideology, also with the later Indo-Europeans, see Mallory, 140–141.

85 Karl Jettmar: *Die Religionen des Hindukusch*, therein: “Die Religion der Kalash,” Stuttgart 1975, Kohlhammer Verlag, 333, 335, 410.

86 Op. cit., 331–337, 367–368.

87 Op. cit., 367, 371, 398.

88 Op. cit., 333, 331–337, 368, 396.

89 Op. cit., 333; Loude and Lièvre, 27. This purity ideology is by no means a late adoption by the Kalash-Aryans, but comes from their early Indo-European heritage, as can be seen in the early patriarchal development of India under the Indo-Aryans.

90 Jettmar, 350.

91 Op. cit., 360, 410.

92 Mallory, 128.

93 A. Raziq Palwal: *The Mother Goddess in Kafiristan. The Place of the Mother Goddess in the Religious Dualism of the Kafir Aryans, Afghanistan,* Dissertation Kabul University, Afghanistan, 1992, and Louisiana State University, USA, 1972, Introduction and Chapter III.

94 Jettmar, 343, 349, 351, 361 and Fig. 403–405.

95 Op. cit., 372.

96 Mallory, 142.

97 Palwal, Introduction and Chapter III; Jettmar, 396.

98 Jettmar, 348–349.

99 Op. cit., 349–350.

100 Op. cit., 341–344.

101 For example, in Sanskrit: "dyaus pitar," in Greek: "zeus pater," in Latin: "deus pater," and also the Roman father of the gods "Ju-piter" are derived from the early Indo-European root "dyeus pater." In Illyrian: "dei patyros," in Old German: "ziu," in Hithitian: "d'sius," with the Kalash: "dez au."

102 For example, the Greek Zeus "gives birth" to Athena from his head and to Dionysus from his thigh (see Graves: *The Greek Myths,* 38, 46); the Indian Vishnu "gives birth" to Lakshmi from his forehead (see James: *The Cult of the Mother Goddess,* 165–167); the Greek Prometheus forms deities and people out of clay (see Graves, 27–28, 126); the Babylonian god Ea creates the perfect man from the blood of Kingus (see Graves, 131).

103 Graves: *The Greek Myths*; Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros.*

104 For such notions of the underworld see, for example, the ancient Greek and Germanic peoples: Ibid.

105 For example, the early Indo-European Perkuno, god of thunderstorms; the Greek Zeus, the "thunderer," with his lightning; the Germanic Thor with his "hammer" (horsehead club); the Slavic god of thunder Svarožić/Radegast; also the war gods Ares (Greek), Mars (Roman), Indra (Indian).

106 Examples are: the "Ragnarök" in the northern Germanic tradition; the "Second Battle of Mag Tured" in the early Irish tradition; the "Kurukshetra" in the Indian epic *Mahabharata* (see Mallory, 129–130). The epic "Ragnarök" closes with the earth reviving and the appearance of a new, innocent human couple. See *Die Edda,* Germanic mythology; *The poetic Edda*, transl. and ed.: Carolyne Larrington, Oxford 2019, Oxford University Press, 50, 90.

107 This chronology is based on the work by the archaeologist Gerhard Poellauer: *Die verlorene Geschichte der Amazonen,* Klagenfurt 2002, Ebooks AT Verlag.

108 A typical example of this is the Exhibition catalog *Starke Frauen,* Munich 2006, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München.

109 See the rich source for such stories of Eurasian peoples by Adrienne Mayor: *The Amazons. Lives & Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World,* Princeton & Oxford 2014, Princeton University Press.

110 See the exhibition catalog *Amazonen. Geheimnisvolle Kriegerinnen,* ed.: Historisches Museum der Pfalz Speyer, Munich 2010, Edition Minerva; therein the introductory article by Lars Börner, 17–23, and the article by Jochen Fornasier, 65–71. At many points the argumentation of these authors is highly problematic.

111 Mayor, 64, 67.

112 Renate Rolle: "Tod und Begräbnis. Nekropolen und die bisher erkennbare Stellung von Frauen mit Waffen," in: *Amazonen,* 116; Renate Rolle: "Bewaffnung und mögliche Kampfesweise skythischer Kriegerinnen," in: *Amazonen*, 159.

113 See the exhibition catalog *Amazonen*.

114 Poellauer quotes the ancient authors on page 8, in: *Geschichte der Amazonen*.

115 An obvious distinction between "warrior women" as women fighting together with men, and "Amazons" forming warrior women societies exclusively made up of women, was first made by Pierre Samuel: *Amazones, Guerrières et Gaillardes*, Grenoble 1975, Presses universitaires de Grenoble.

116 Concept from Poellauer.

117 Bachofen had already suggested this background based on his studies on mother right in the pre-antique world. But he assumed that Amazon societies were a "final form of mother right, growing to the point of being unnatural," before their downfall at the hands of the patriarchal men–a view worthy of criticism. See Johann Jakob Bachofen: *Myth, Religion and Mother Right*.

118 In popular thinking, Amazon societies are often equated with matriarchies, an idea which only causes confusion. This goes back to the outdated prejudice that matriarchies are based on "female domination," which is wrong on two counts: neither matriarchies nor Amazon societies are based on domination according to patriarchal patterns.

119 We rely here on the interesting research by Gerhard Poellauer, which we largely follow. He used an interdisciplinary approach: in addition to existing and his own archaeological research, he also included historical written sources by both Greeks and other peoples. See Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*, and the earlier, unpublished manuscript by Gerhard Poellauer: *Auf den Spuren der Amazonen*, Klagenfurt, May 1994.

120 See the archaeologist Rolle: "Tod und Begräbnis," in: *Amazonen*, and the author Mayor: *The Amazons*. –In this respect Adrienne Mayor is not correct either, who in her extensive book presents the phenomenon of warrior women who nevertheless are not Amazons; the title of the book is therefore misleading. In the archaeological part of her book she discusses the research into the Scythian warrior women's graves, based on the excellent book by the archaeologist Jeannine Davis-Kimball: *Warrior Women. An Archaeologist's Search for History's Hidden Heroines*, New York, NY, 2002, Warner Books. Davis-Kimball correctly labels these combative women as "female warriors" and does not call them "Amazons."

121 The social order of the Hatti was indirectly deduced from written sources by the Hittites. See Friedrich Cornelius: *Geschichte der Hethiter*, Darmstadt 1979 (3.), Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; S. R. Bin-Nun: *The Tawananna in the Hittite Kingdom*, Heidelberg 1975, Winter Verlag; G. I. Dovgalo: "On the transition to succession to kingship by patrilineal law," in: *Sovetskaya Ethnografiya 6*, 1963, 72f.; a short summary in Poellauer, 104–106.

122 See the Italian archaeologist L. Bernabò-Brea: *Poliochni. Città preistorica nell'isola di Lemnos*, 2 vols., Rome 1964–1976, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider.

123 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*, 64–79. The fortresses of Myrina and Hephaistia have not yet been archaeologically researched.

124 Op. cit., 84.

125 See Graves, 545–546 (sources of ancient authors there).

126 Op. cit., 546.

127 See Chapter 7 of the book in hand.

128 The native men of this culture must have died in the conquest or played no glorious role. It is very likely that the women subsequently introduced gender segregation, for a detail in the Lemnos myth states that the women had forced the men to emigrate, abandoning the previous king in a boat on the sea (Graves, 545–546). Since they had killed all foreign

"husbands," this can only refer to the native men. –A similar myth comes from South America that is not linked to Greek sources. Here, too, matriarchal women, after being conquered and raped, get rid of their false "husbands" by killing them, and then continue their liberated community alone, as armed Amazons. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapter 11.2., 228–229.

129 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*, 72–73.

130 This may be due to the transient nature of wooden houses that don't last long in humid areas with lush vegetation. Another valid reason could be the flooding of the former Euxinos Lake by the Bosporus rift, which gave rise to the Black Sea with its present, considerably larger extension (in the 6th millennium.). All Neolithic settlements near the coast were inundated. See the research by William Ryan and Walter Pitman: *Noah's Flood*, New York 1998/2000, Simon&Schuster Inc.; Harald Haarmann: *Geschichte der Sintflut. Auf den Spuren der frühen Zivilisationen*, Munich 2005, Verlag Beck.

131 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*, 39–40.

132 Op. cit., 87.

133 Greek source: Kallimachos, see Graves, 72. In this myth, Artemis, the tutelary goddess of the Amazons, is regarded as the founder of the cities. –Ancient authors name the following cities, among others: Mytilene on the neighboring island of Lesbos; along the West coast of Asia Minor from north to south Pitane, Gryne, Myrine, Kyme, Smyrna, Ephesus, Pygela, Anaia/Priene, concluding with Amazoneion on the island of Patmos; along the Sea of Marmara, Myrleia and Nikaia; on the Black Sea, Kynna, Thibais, Amastris and Sinope (see Map 6). Most of these Bronze Age settlements have not yet been found archaeologically. Today their places are not to be found on the coast, whose course has changed, but further inland like the ancient Ephesus.

134 See Exhibition catalog *Amazonen*, 67.

135 Greek source: Kallimachos, see Mayor, 152, 153. In Greek vase paintings, Amazons are depicted at such wild dances with raised shields, swords and spears.

136 This interesting thesis comes from Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*.

137 Op. cit., 139.

138 Op. cit. 41–43. Poellauer refers here and in the following text to the excavations by the Turkish archaeologists K. Kökten, T. Özgüç, N. Özgüç: "1940–1941 yilinda Türk Tarih Kurumu adina yapilan Samsun Bölgesi kazilari hakkinda ilk kisa rapor," in: *Belleten* IX, 1945, 361–400; T. Özgüç: "Samsun hafriyatinin 1941–1942 neticeleri," in: *3. Türk Tarih Kongresi 1943*, Ankara 1948, 393–419; T. Özgüç: *Excavations at Masat Höyük and Investigations in its vicinity*, Ankara 1978, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi.

139 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen*, 44–45.

140 Op. cit., 55–57.

141 Op. cit., 46–48.

142 Ibid.

143 Op. cit., 49–55.

144 The combination, in the grave goods, of female tools, jewelry and cosmetic utensils and also weapons is always classified as a typical warrior woman's grave in today's archeology. However, thus far this has only been investigated for graves of the steppe cultures. See Rolle: "Tod und Begräbnis," in: *Amazonen*, 115; Elena Fialko: "Skythische ‚Amazonen' in den Nordschwarzmeersteppen," in: *Amazonen*, 120.

145 This etymological derivation comes from Friedrich Cornelius, 1979.

146 A Greek legend says that the Amazons burned off a breast to be able to shoot better with the bow. This is not only factually wrong, because female breasts are not an obstacle to

archery, but it is also intended to fuel prejudice, suggesting the Amazons are cruel.

147 Horses were sacred to the Amazons, and this “weapon” invented by men was also taken over by women. Amazon queens often had names including the Greek word for “horse,” for ex. “Hippolyte,” which means “leading the horse,” or “Melanippe,” which means “the black horse.”

148 Greek source: Apollonius of Rhodes in the Greek epic *Argonautica*. In Latin: C. Valerius Flaccus.

149 Mayor, 166–167. –The excavations by the Turkish archaeologists took place in 2010; the ensemble corresponds exactly to the description in the above-mentioned Greek source.

150 Mayor, 166.

151 The notion that the Amazons allegedly killed or mutilated their male children belongs to the same type of Greek legends as that of breast mutilation; the aim was to make Amazons seem particularly cruel.

152 On such disintegration processes in matriarchal societies see: the history of the Nayar (South India) and of the Iroquois (North America), in Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies,* Chapters 14, 15.

153 Evidence is provided for this by a Greek vase painting depicting an erotic courting scene between a huntress and the Amazon Penthesilea (see Mayor, 136 and illustration). Furthermore, it was customary in the Tibetan “Land of Women” for female couples to live together in a household (Chinese source: *Der Klassiker der Berge und Meere*, collection of Chinese mythology from the 3rd century, reference in Mayor, 418). What was valid for Tibet was probably also valid for other “Lands of Women.”

154 Greek sources: Pausanias, Apollodorus, Diodorus.

155 See these legends in Graves, 449 f. and 320 f.

156 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen,* 114. In the Hittite sources the Achaeans are called “Ahhijawa.”

157 Cornelius: *Geschichte der Hethiter;* Bin-Nun, *The Tawananna;* Dovgalo: “On the transition.”

158 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen,* 106.

159 Op. cit., 112–113, 118.

160 Graves, 557–560, 574–575, 577.

161 Poellauer: *Geschichte der Amazonen,* 91–93.

162 Greek source: Strabon.

163 In the Iron Age the Scythians pushed ever further west from the Far East, from the Sajan Mountains and the Altai to the Black Sea. They drove out other Indo-European peoples, who fled to the west and south. They built their immense kurgans from east to west; the richest royal tombs were found not only in the Black Sea, but also in far eastern Tuva. The gold came from the Altai Mountains. See Parzinger: “Die Reiternomaden,” 32–33.

164 Greek sources: Herodotus: Book IV, passages 110–116, and Pseudo-Hippocrates.

165 The Amazons only appear in this Scythian male costume in later Greek vase painting; in the past they are dressed like Greek warriors. In the earliest pictures they wear long patterned skirts with a slit to make moving easier.

166 See also Renate Rolle: “Umwelt und Wohnverhältnisse. Frauenleben zwischen Wagen, Jurten und Zelten,” in: *Amazonen*, 105.

167 Greek source: Herodotus: Book IV, pass 71–72; Poellauer, 121; Renate Rolle: “Zur skythischen Geschichte und Kultur,” in: *Amazonen,* 103; Parzinger: “Die Reiternomaden,” 36.

168 Mayor, 130–132.

169 Fialko, 119.

170 Most of them died between the ages of 25 and 35, occasionally sooner or later, and warrior women graves of girls aged 10–15 have even been found. Op. cit., 120, 122; Mayor, 65, 74.

171 Fialko, 119, 122.

172 For example, out of 50 burials there were only 7 warrior women’s graves (in Certomlyk) or out of 317 burials, of which 135 were women’s graves, only 12 warrior women’s graves (in Mamaj-Gora). On Certomlyk see Rolle: “Tod und Begräbnis,” 116, on Mamaj-Gora see Fialko, 121.

173 Mayor, 64. She refers to Natalia Berseneva: “Women and Children in the Sagat Culture,” in: Linduff and Robinson: *Are all Warriors Male? Gender Roles on the Eurasian Steppe*, Lanham 2008, Altamora Press.

174 Poellauer, 124–125.

175 In Adrienne Mayor, they are wrongly called “Amazons” everywhere; in Renate Rolle, who refers to the Scythian-Sarmatian warrior women, the existence of Amazons is denied on principle.

176 For example, Queen Tomyris of the People of the Massagets; she even defeated and killed King Cyrus II, the Great, of Persia (around 530 BCE). Greek sources: Herodotus, Strabon, Justin; see Mayor, 143–144.

177 Examples can be found in Mayor, 365–366, 370, 371, 401, and many more.

178 For example the nameless “Virgin of Yüeh,” who was allowed to teach her perfect technique in sword fencing to the officers of a king and, finally, was harshly banished from the court (China); or Mulan, a woman of the people, who, after great acts of war which saved the honor of her family, returned home modestly and took up the female role again (China); see Mayor, 311–312, 427–428. In Mayors book, a great treasure of such tales of warrior women in Eurasia can be found.

179 Natalia V. Polos’mak: “Die ‚Amazone‘ von Pazyryk,” in: *Amazonen*, 129.

←307 | 308→

6

Bronze Age and Iron Age in West Asia: The Rise of State and Empire

Two completely different cultural paths led to the rise of patriarchy: one in the steppes and one in Mesopotamia. They are based on very different geographical conditions whose challenges had to be tackled by the people. In this chapter we follow the second course of development.

Chronology

6th millennium:	Early Copper Stone Age:	Hassuna, Samarra, Halaf in North Mesopotamia
5th millennium:	Middle Copper Stone Age:	Ubaid in South Mesopotamia
4th millennium:	Late Copper Stone Age:	Eridu, Ur, Uruk in South Mesopotamia
3rd millennium:	Early Bronze Age:	Time of the “Uruk expansion”
	2,600–2,000:	Early Dynasties, Sumer and Akkad
2nd millennium:	Middle and Late Bronze Age, 2,000–1,000:	Babylon and Assyria
1st millennium:	Iron Age:	Assyrian Empires

Bronze Age Economy and Politics in West Asia: Organization of the Precious Water

New Spaces: The First Settlement of the Mesopotamian Plains

From the 6th millennium onwards, the Fertile Crescent became infertile due to prolonged cooling and dehydration, which initially led to considerably more favorable conditions for Mesopotamia to the south. During the previous humid, water-rich period, the plains between the two major rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, were frequently flooded, swampy, full of malaria-bearing mosquitoes, and thus uninhabitable. The cooler period made these hot plains drier and the land accessible for settlement. Therefore, several groups of people had not only left the Fertile Crescent to the west and north, but had also moved south along the two great rivers.

In the Early Copper Stone Age, the cultures of Hassuna, Samarra and Halaf (approx. 6,000–5,000) originated in the plains of northern Mesopotamia (today North Iraq).[1] The oldest, Hassuna, was on the upper reaches of the Tigris, its successor Samarra stretched from the Tigris and the hilly foreland of the Zāgros Mountains to the middle of the Euphrates. Halaf developed independently from these cultures at the headwaters of the Khabur, a tributary of the Euphrates, covering a wide area from northern Syria to Anatolia (Map 8). These cultures can only be distinguished by their pottery, which was extremely artistic in the Halaf culture.

The people from the older culture, Hassuna, lived in small villages and large residential hills in houses of a similar size and style, each providing space for one clan. There also were larger buildings to store grain for the community. Nothing has been found that indicates special buildings as the seat of a chief.[2] Numerous urns with children's skeletons have been discovered under the floors and doorsteps of the houses, and the custom of burial beneath the houses was also spread in Samarra.[3] Some of the most frequent finds are female figurines.

←310 | 311→Halaf was a highly uniform culture and also developed without chieftains. It had extensive settlements such as Tell Halaf, Tell Arpachiyah and Tell Brak, while Domuztepe was so large it covered more than 18 ha and is to be regarded as a city.[4] The numerous eye figurines of Tell Brak are famous and they symbolically ←311 | 312→depict the mother line (Fig. 1).[5] The enormous extension of this culture over 600 km can be traced back to an extensive network of interchange relations. Many stamp seals and counting tokens have been found, which clearly show the complexity of the interaction both within and outside the settlements. These stamp seals show a great variety as the network was not only accessible for a few prominent individuals but for everyone in the communities: they were handled by a lot of people. Therefore, the uniformity of the Halaf culture emerged over a wide area—not through coercion, but rather through vast inclusive commonness based on reciprocity.[6]

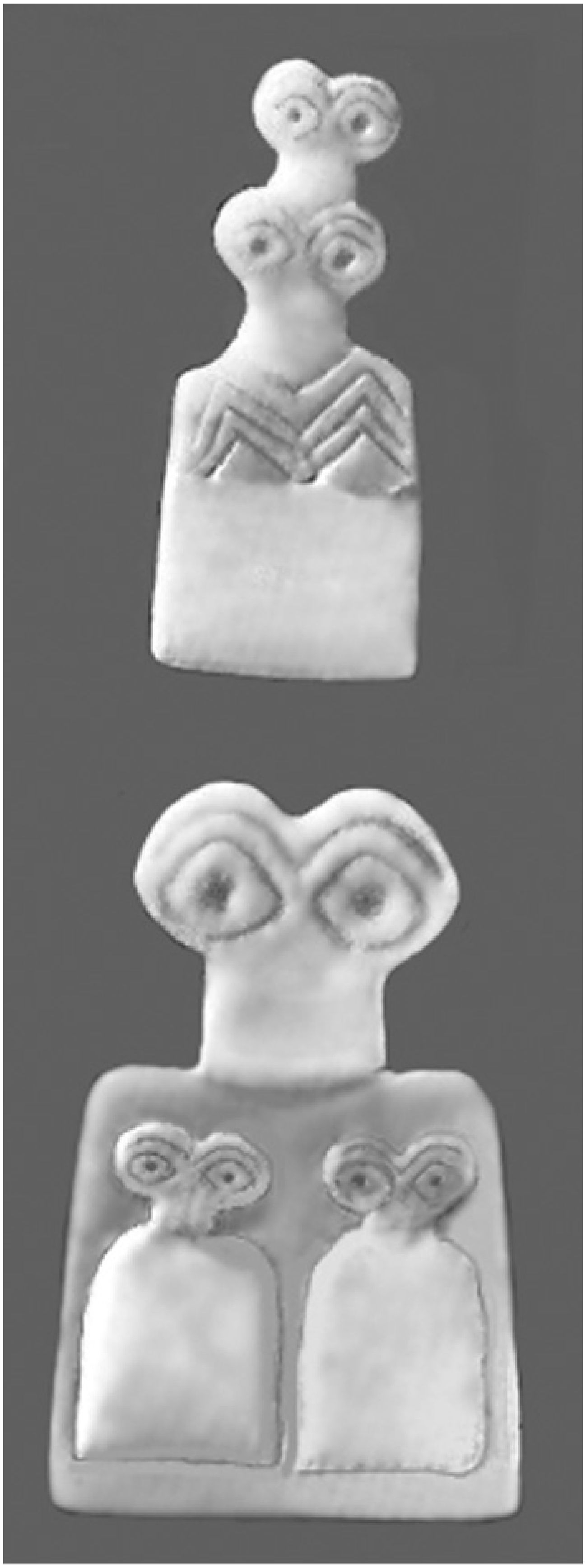


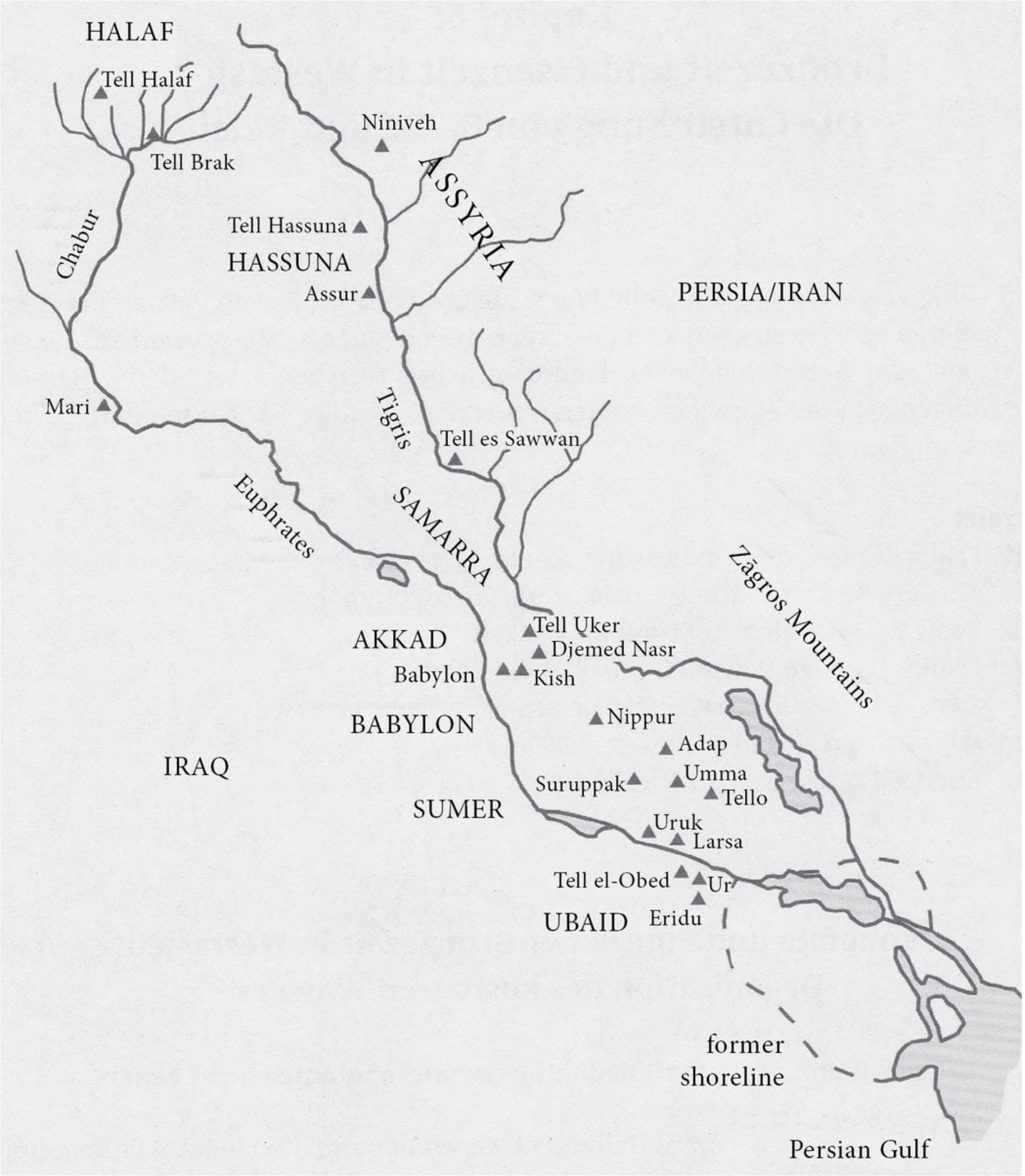
Fig. 1: Eye figurines from Tell Brak symbolizing the mother-line (North Mesopotamia) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

These characteristics of the Hassuna and Halaf cultures indicate egalitarian matriarchal societies coming from the traditions of the Fertile Crescent. But while these two cultures were engaged in traditional rain-fed agriculture, which was still possible in the hilly countryside at the edge of the mountains, supplemented ←312 | 313→ by the construction of wells, the Samarra culture, Hassuna’s successor, initiated a new development. The people of this culture were the first to penetrate the rainless southern plain and also the first to invent an artificial irrigation of gardens and fields.[7] This innovation was revolutionary and would later have far-reaching consequences, above all inevitably binding people to certain agricultural areas. In the beginning, artificial irrigation did not present any particular difficulties, especially not on the Euphrates, up to the middle reaches of which the Samarra culture advanced. This is because the river, after leaving the mountain area, flows through the wide plains with only a slight gradient, moving slowly and forming large meandering loops. Here artificial irrigation was created taking advantage of the annual flooding of the land, building reservoirs for the water as well as simple dams to channel the water. In addition, the sediment-filled bed of the Euphrates is higher than its surrounding area so it is very easy to divert water into the fields by using gravity-flow irrigation. The archaeologists investigating the Samarra culture were therefore able to find the remains of a simple but fully developed canal system.[8] The situation is different with the Tigris, however, which carries much more water and is fed by strong tributaries from the Zāgros Mountains. This means it flows very quickly in its upper reaches, cutting several meters into the terrain over long stretches. However, in its middle reaches it also flows through flat terrain and begins to meander, so that its water can be obtained by means of simple hoisting devices. This method, too, was invented by the people of the Samarra culture, so they became the first specialists in artificial irrigation, as well as needing to organize the allocation of water and fields.[9]

Here immediately the assertion reappears that the organization of irrigation presupposes “functions of leadership and an elite,” that greater social division of labor and complexity are synonymous with “hierarchy,” that a “surplus” is generated, which is appropriated by the elite, and that stamp seals and counting tokens indicate their “individual possessions.”[10] Thus it is suggested that the Samarra culture already contained the seeds for the first hierarchical state structures, which came about in Mesopotamia in a perfectly unilinear development. This has led to the general, but false, assumption that the organization of irrigation systems resulted in the beginning of patriarchal patterns.—Nevertheless, nothing supports this interpretation, since no archaeological evidence has been found for such an assumption. Here, too, complexity is confused with hierarchy, and the ability of egalitarian societies to organize themselves is underestimated. Instead, we must assume that the clan households of the Samarra culture, which originates from the matriarchal Hassuna culture, allocated water and fields by means of community agreement without any leader responsible for the planning. Stamp seals and counting tokens helped to allocate these fairly to each household; they are clan marks rather than signs of private ownership.

←313 | 314→

In the Middle Copper Stone Age (5th millennium) the Ubaid culture (also Obaid or Obed) developed in South Mesopotamia (South Iraq). It emerged from the advance of the Samarra people to the Persian Gulf in the extreme south, where there were vast marshlands at that time. They settled near the former shoreline of the Gulf, which extended considerably further inland, near the lagoons just before the mouth of the Euphrates (see Map 8).[11] Here the Ubaid culture was born, the predecessor of the later Sumer culture.[12]


HALAF
Tell Halaf
Tell Brak
Niniveh
ASSYRIA
Tell Hassuna
HASSUNA
Assur
Chabur
PERSIA/IRAN
Mari
Tigris
Tell es Sawwan
Euphrates
SAMARRA
Zagros Mountains
Tell Uker
Djemed Nasr
AKKAD
Babylon
Kish
BABYLON
Nippur
Adap
IRAQ
Umma
Suruppak
Tello
SUMER
Uruk
Larsa
Tell el-Obed
Ur
Eridu
UBAID
former
shoreline
Persian Gulf

Map 8: The ancient cultures of Mesopotamia

The Ubaid culture combines elements from two traditions. As in the Samarra culture, they developed artificial irrigation in the hot south from the beginning, and also like the Samarra culture female figurines were used to express religious ideas. The statuettes were made of precious alabaster. Also striking is the large "central-hall house," a symmetrical house of three parts with a T-shaped central hall. Each of the three parts of this house had a hearth and a storeroom, so that domestic activities were carried out on the same social level. The central hall was also used for meetings of the clan members. This type of house is a further development of the Samarra culture and is not comparable with any other architecture in West Asia. The houses became standardized with fixed proportions and bitumen was used to waterproof them, necessary due to the high groundwater level in this area. Their pottery, however, was new, being produced on a rotating disk and was relatively unadorned. The greater use of copper in melting and casting was new as well.[13] The economy also changed: one additional factor was the cultivation of the date palm and an increasing tendency to breed cattle in the marshlands. Sheep and goats could not tolerate the humid southern climate, so their herding was limited to the plains of North Mesopotamia, where these animals were native. Households were self-sustaining and independent in terms of basic supplies and services, but each household also produced a particular product, ←314 | 315→such as special pottery, leather or textile goods, which could be exchanged for other goods such as bitumen, obsidian, metal and luxury goods.[14]

In this way, households formed a unit both as a residence and a workshop. The pioneering situation in which the people of South Mesopotamia found themselves in led them to concentrate in order to use all available resources. They had to protect themselves against all eventualities, due to the closeness of the river and the extreme climate, which led them to create community reserves as emergency relief at times of flood or drought. Again, it is claimed that this resulted in “strict control by the head of the household” to “manage the human resources,” which means “hierarchy within the household,”—and this head of the household is always imagined to be male and the clan patriarchal. In this case the patriarchal Greek household, or “oikos,” serves as a model, whose context, however, is thousands of years later, and which emerged under very different conditions.[15] Once again, this time in the Ubaid culture, such proposals are back projections with no archaeological evidence. Rather, in a pioneering situation a close clan bond that supports the strong cohesion of the members is enough to overcome difficulties.

The question is rather what motivated the Samarra people to move further and further along the Tigris into the humid, inhospitable south until they developed the Ubaid culture. The reason is the renewed intensification of desiccation in the 5th millennium in the Eurasian Steppe, which would also be clearly felt in the Persian highlands and North Mesopotamia. This is the same situation that turned the early Indo-European tribes in the Eurasian Steppe into herder warriors. The constant disturbances as they spread over the Steppe to its southern limits forced the previous peoples living there to flee from them and move into the Persian highlands, where their ancestors had once come from. However, this also triggered a substantial displacement of peoples in Persia, which then became noticeable in North Mesopotamia. Consequently, it can be expected that several people would migrate from the northeastern regions into the Tigris valley at that time, in search of water and land. This may have caused the Samarra people to leave their permanent settlements with their irrigation systems and move ever further south. It is also conceivable that there was some mixing and the immigrants introduced new elements into the Samarra culture, such as the potter’s rotating disk and an early form of the central-hall house. However, this could not stop the Samarra people’s continued evasion southwards.

←315 | 316→After the Ubaid culture emerged from this situation and became stable, it expanded again northwards. There was no other direction, since the sea was to the south. This culture stretched northwards to the large area of the Halaf culture and is said to have “replaced” it.[16] However, a somehow violent “replacement” cannot be seen, because there was no conquest through the use of weapons. Rather, the strong social similarities between the two cultures, such as their egalitarian, matriarchal patterns, were more indicative at that time of a wide network of communication and exchange, with the Ubaid offshoots merging peacefully with the Halaf culture in the area of North Mesopotamia.

Crowding into “paradise”: The Formation of City States

In the 4th millennium there was another change in the climate, this time becoming even cooler and drier. The alluvial plains were more rarely flooded, the swamps and lagoons in the south retreated. Nevertheless, there was still plenty of water in South Mesopotamia, even without the construction of large canals, and the alluvial plains remained fertile.[17] But the arid climate had a devastating effect on the Persian highlands and adjacent areas of North Mesopotamia, and a zone of deserts emerged around the edges of the mountains. People started to move again, and immigration of different ethnic groups from the north and east increased, now that the water-rich south had become known as a habitable area, a “paradise” compared to their own location. The Sumerian people formed part of these immigrants, and they possessed such a strange and peculiar language that it was not related to any language known at that time.[18] They founded their first cities close to Tell el-Obed, the most important hill in the Ubaid culture, and these developed to considerable size: Eridu with 12 ha, Ur with 10 ha and, a little further upstream of the Euphrates, Uruk with 70 ha (see Map 8).[19] This happened peacefully, because there was still enough room for everyone. The late Copper Stone Age started with these changes.

The Sumerians learned from the Ubaid culture and adopted much from it, evidenced especially by the similarity of the houses with the T-shaped central hall. From this they developed their early temple buildings, supplemented by a niche for the image of the deity. These temples were small in size, they served the city community as meeting places for councils and religious celebrations, and if a single building was not enough, a temple was built for each quarter. No “status differences among the inhabitants” can be derived from this, nor “forms of dominance”[20]—how could they have arisen so suddenly? Forms of dominance and patriarchal patterns do not appear out of the blue, when they have never existed before, during thousands of years. Above all, without them being defined in more detail, their meaning remains completely unclear. The cult houses or temples were placed on ever higher terraces which lay on top of one another in steps, an architectural method from which the Ziggurat, the Mesopotamian step pyramid, later developed.[21] Only these late monumental buildings served as a demonstration of power, while in earlier times such terraces were a practical way of protecting the religious buildings from flooding.

From Ubaid, the Sumerians also adopted the principle of community stock, which was kept in the temple, the community house. This was necessary because the climate and geographical conditions had not changed. Stamp seals and counting tokens were used, as in the clan household, to register the receipt of goods and to distribute the output fairly according to fixed dimensions and weights. In this respect, the temple served as a communal “large household,” as had been the case in the past with the sacred communal houses; this arrangement is called a “temple economy.” Even this does not require a ruler or elite who would manipulate these goods for their own benefit, nor do the counting tokens—as has already been mentioned—immediately indicate a “central administration” from above.[22] In the early Sumerian cities, the clans themselves determined how community supplies should be used, and if a leader or group was entrusted with the administration, they acted as delegates of the clans.

The Sumerian temple economy has been misunderstood as “centralization” in research from the beginning, always assuming a strict hierarchy. This dates back to an erroneous definition of “city,” for which centralization and domination are supposed to be characteristic. However, much earlier, in the Neolithic period, large cities already managed without these patriarchal patterns, such as the city of Çatal Höyük in Anatolia and the cities of the Tripolje culture in Ukraine. Older and larger than the early Sumerian cities, they show no signs of hierarchy or central administration. Instead, they are excellent examples of the complexity and effectiveness of the *egalitarian self-government* of the clans living there. But the importance of these cities is scarcely mentioned in archaeology ←317 | 318→because of the mis-definition of “city,” always taken to mean a centralized and patriarchally organized settlement.[23] Hence we are left with the misconception of the so-called “first cities of humanity” in Mesopotamia and the “urbanization” that is said to have taken place only here—a deplorable diminishment of history.

Even the early Sumerian temple economy is thus wrongly equated with centralization, without criticism, and then opposed with the argument that the economy of the individual households continued to exist alongside it.[24] Here researchers get entangled in their own false presuppositions: a temple economy and an individual economy are obviously not mutually exclusive because the early temple economy was not centralistic! Rather, this confirms the assumption that the temple administration was responsible for storing the community’s surpluses for times of need, this surplus coming from the individual households; that means, the economy was basically decentralized.

In the following epoch the situation changed fundamentally. In the late 4th and early 3rd millennium, the Bronze Age emerged with the Uruk period, which is the time when state organization first appeared. This was neither intentional nor planned, but had to do with a rapid increase in the population on the alluvial plain between the two rivers. Previously there was only sparse settlement, but now the number of villages and cities increased tenfold. That meant that the first immigrants were followed by a host of peoples fleeing into the fertile plains from the continued deterioration in the climate, turning entire areas of their land into desert. At the same time, the danger of war increased from nomadic steppe and desert peoples, who had long lived in the dry zones, but were finding it increasingly difficult to survive and had rapidly militarized. The neighboring peoples also fled from them. They moved southwards, where they knew there were the “fleshpots” of the cities with their clever stock economy. These peoples were all absorbed by the local culture, resulting in a dozen new cities. The greatest density of settlements developed where the Euphrates and Tigris are nearest together, and ←318 | 319→then spread to the entire southern part of the country, which is surrounded by both rivers in a wide arc. The existing cities also swelled, Uruk alone increasing to

250 ha.[25] This led to a big and lasting problem, namely how to guarantee the supply of such fast-growing populations.

This resulted, on the one hand, in the expansion of artificial irrigation systems, and led, on the other hand, to a constantly expanding administration. The local canals, which had previously irrigated the fields of individual, independent clan households, now had to be replaced by a sophisticated canal system to provide the necessary water. The canal system was divided into a hierarchy with four levels. There were few central main channels running longitudinally through the entire area. They flowed into side channels, each of which supplied water to the region of a city. From here, smaller channels were branched off for the fields, where they were divided into a large number of lesser watercourses (Fig. 2). Such an irrigation system no longer functioned solely by gravity flow of the water from the rivers, but required sluices on the main canals to regulate the amount of water at the branches, as well as sluices on the side canals, and dams on the fields, which enclosed exactly identical squares and retained the water so it could seep into the ground. This required a hierarchy in the maintenance of the canal system, with the highest administrators being responsible for digging and maintaining the central main channels. Under these were the administrators of the individual cities, who had to care for the side channels for the various quarters and the smaller channels for the fields.[26]

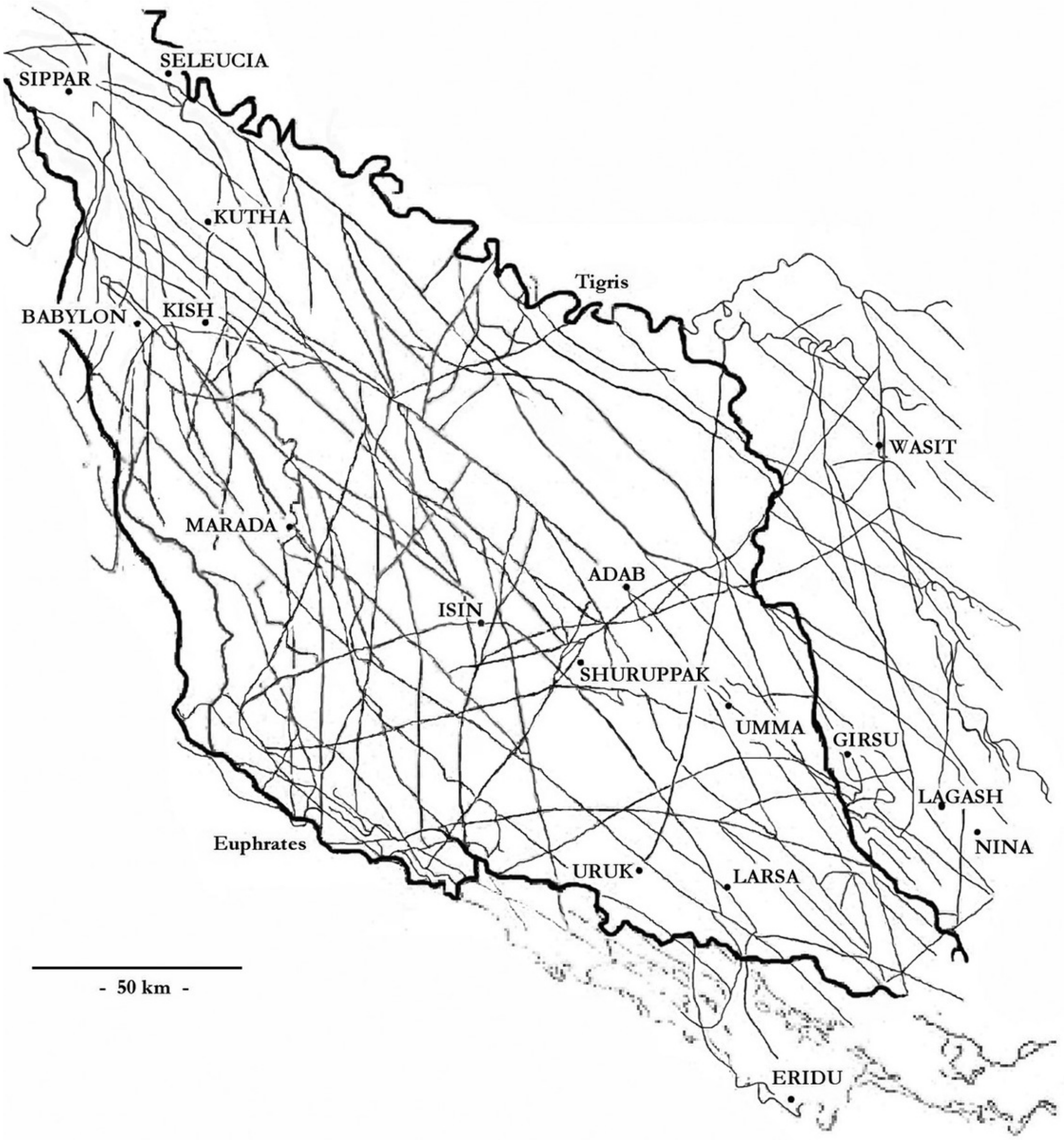

SELEUCIA
SIPPAR
KUTHA
Tigris
BABYLON
KISH
WASIT
MARADA
ADAB
ISIN
SHURUPPAK
UMMA
GIRSU
LAGASH
NINA
Euphrates
URUK
LARSA
- 50 km -
ERIDU

Fig. 2: The canal system of Sumer (South Mesopotamia) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

The next step was to increase agricultural production to feed the rapidly growing population. For this reason, large areas of the plain were turned into farmland, at the same time reducing the size of the fields and intensifying cultivation. Any agricultural surpluses entered the temple economy and were accurately registered there. Their redistribution was also precisely regulated and rationed. This is archaeologically documented by thousands of fragments of rationing containers, the so-called “Bevel Rim Bowl,” as well as fragments of stamped clay seals and inscribed clay tablets: 80% of these finds contain economic data related to natural produce and goods entering and exiting the temple stock, and are therefore part of the temple registry. It should be noted that this economic system did not mean that goods were hoarded by just a few people but were re-distributed according to precisely defined measures.[27]

←319 | 320→The cuneiform script was further developed for the complicated administration of the temple stock. It was not entirely new, but emerged from a very old, local system of signs dating back to the Neolithic period.[28] Accordingly, the “first writing” was not invented here either, but was adopted and adapted to the new purpose—which meant to secularize it.

The remaining 20% of the clay tablets are also in cuneiform writing: lists of all the titles of the administrators in hierarchical order according to rank. The first title refers to the highest administrator, the “king of the city,” who, however, did not yet have the power to rule over everyone else. This person was ←320 | 321→responsible to the “Council of Elders” and had to obtain the approval of the assembly of all household heads.[29] Furthermore, there was a strong religious component because the king was also responsible to the city deity for the welfare of its citizens. However, for the first time it is a *stratified society*; in other words, a hierarchical society of ranks. It had emerged from demographic pressure in a difficult ecological environment. It is, however, a *hierarchy of responsibility*, not yet of domination. “Domination” means a hierarchy of exploitation from top to bottom, guaranteed by an armed enforcement staff. Such an enforcement staff is the criterion for dominance, and this was not yet present here, as the king was not surrounded by a permanent warrior caste.

With this stratified society and the hierarchy of responsibility, the history of the Sumerian city states began. As states, they now transformed the common land that had previously been generally available into their territory, to which they claimed ownership. As local agricultural cities, however, they did not yet have the exploitative characteristics of later states, which appropriated entire countries from other peoples, but they remained in the defined area they cultivated. With their territory they achieved their goal of guaranteeing supplies for the city's inhabitants and bringing about general prosperity. The archaeological finds from the graves of ordinary people provide evidence of this, because grave goods made of precious metals, such as gold, silver, lead, copper and the blue lapis lazuli stone, were also found there, not only with the top administrators. People also erected precious statues in temples and shrines for the deceased, the so-called "sculptures of prayers."[30] They show the simple costume of the Sumerians, who dressed in a shaggy wool skirt, with a cape and sometimes a round hat for the women (Fig. 3), but none shows any emblems of power. This generalized distribution of wealth among the population corresponds to the non-accumulative but re-distributive economy in the Sumerian city states.

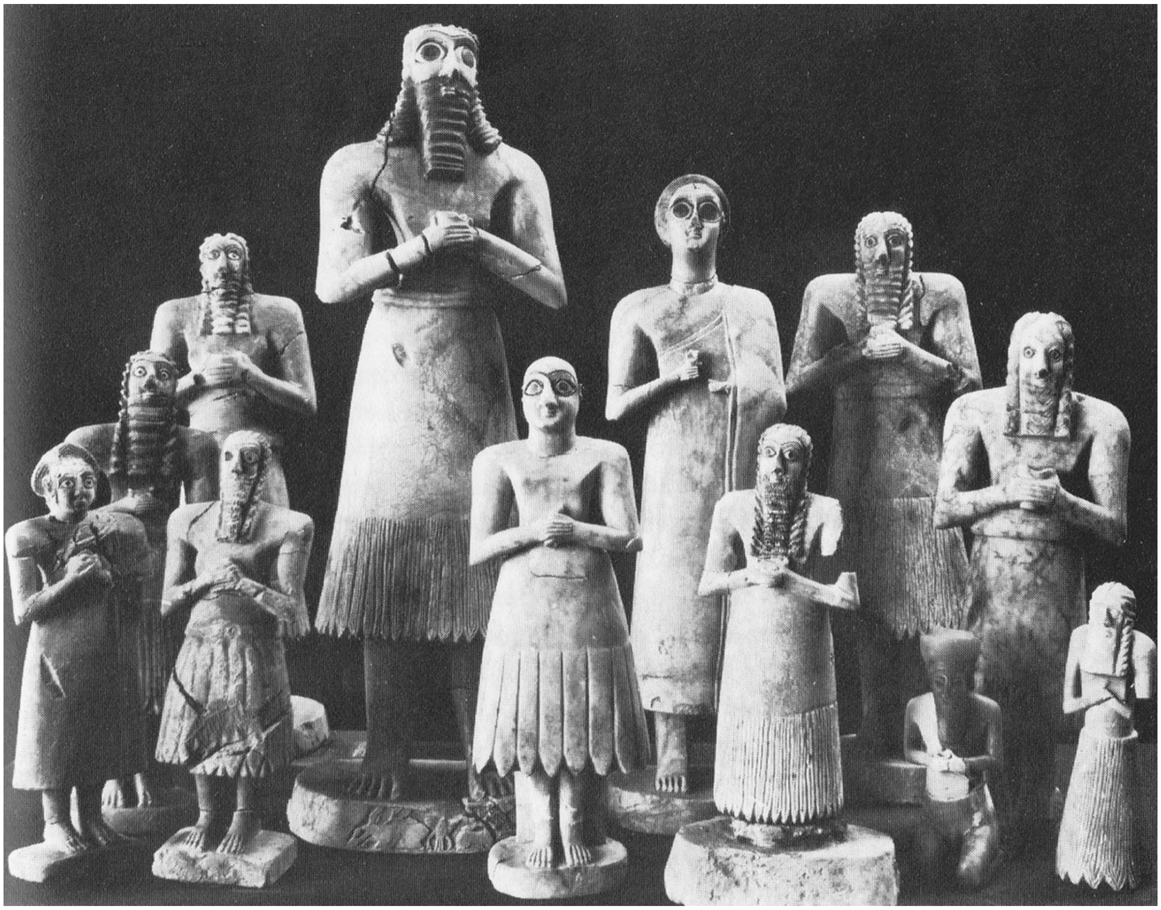


Fig. 3: Male and female statues of so-called “prayers,” temple of Tell Asmar (South Mesopotamia)

Such general prosperity was increased by extensive trade relations in the late Uruk period (known as the “Uruk expansion”). These relations could take place undisturbed in a relatively peaceful time, because the warlike disturbances had not yet reached the area, and in Uruk itself no combat weapons have been found for this period.[31] Sumerians did not only trade with their neighbors, but also supplied themselves with raw materials from the north. In return, the cities in the north received cultural goods and techniques from Uruk, which they readily ←321 | 322→adopted. In this way the influence of Uruk extended as far as the bordering regions of Persia (Susiana) and the upper reaches of the Tigris (Niniveh). Uruk even established its own northern trading posts to ensure the import of valuable raw materials did not dry up.[32]

The Power of Weapons: Regional States and the First Empire

This favorable time of the “Uruk expansion” came to an end suddenly and development stopped almost simultaneously everywhere. This process was hostile, as shown by traces of destruction in the northern regions of Mesopotamia, with mass finds of slingshot balls used as a weapon of war. The northern settlements were abandoned.[33] The cause was nomadic herder warriors, peoples with a Semitic language who had long before moved north from the increasing desertification of ←322 | 323→the Arabian Peninsula to the countries of the Levant (Palestine, Syria) and North Mesopotamia. Here they infiltrated and meanwhile formed the majority of the population.[34] Although not mounted, these early Semites ended the expansion of Uruk to the north and now penetrated far into the south of Mesopotamia. They finally settled on the northern border of the urban area of Sumer as “Akkadians.” The Sumerian cities resisted these invaders by erecting city walls and forming a league.[35] Attempts were also made to integrate the foreigners into their own culture by assimilation. In this way the Akkadians had soon forgotten their nomadic origins and founded their own cities on the northern border of the Sumerian urban area (see Map 8).[36] The Sumerians and Akkadians therefore began to co-exist side by side under the auspices of the same culture. Tensions remained, however, not only because of the great difference of their languages, but also because of their kinship structures, for the Akkadians had brought patrilinearity with them.[37]

The loss of trade in raw materials with the northern regions and these new warlike conditions came as a profound shock for the Sumerians. In addition, the Akkadian city kings extended the territory around their cities so aggressively that their city state Kish exercised hegemony over the Sumerian city states in the first half of the 3rd millennium.[38] In some Sumerian cities they occupied the throne themselves, in other cities the Sumerian kings now had to pay more attention to the art of warfare for defense, something which had not formed part of their duties before. A permanent caste of warriors was formed, under the king’s command, and all other organizational precautions necessary for warfare were taken. This drastic change arose from the need of the Sumerian city states for independence. In this way, the role of the king changed from that of a supreme administrator, who was subject to the city deity, to that of a warring king. As was usual with the Akkadians, the king was now granted the privilege to hand down his royal title, which led to the Early Dynastic period of Sumer in the ←323 | 324→3rd millennium. The kings now made new territorial claims beyond their urban areas, but this led to disputes between the city states, resulting in a certain chaos during the Early Dynastic period.

At the same time, this development was aggravated by ecological problems. The population grew continuously as a result of constant immigration from the north, while at the same time the amount of water in the two major rivers decreased. The result was the threat of water shortage, leading to a reduction in agricultural land, along with the increase in the number of people living there. Finally, the situation of the population and of the water supply changed so dramatically that territorial claims between the cities, made to meet the supplies of their own citizens, could no longer be resolved through arbitration and contracts.[39] Permanent conflicts arose. However, the ecological challenge could not be solved by military means, so attempts were made to cope with the increasing population by instilling even tighter organization. The canals, which were distributed throughout the country like a network, were abandoned in favor of just a few straight main canals, along which all the cities were now located. Independent villages disappeared and most people now lived a dependent life in the ever-expanding cities. This concentration increased to such an extent that an enormously inflated bureaucracy emerged, regulating the water, controlling the ever-scarcer foodstuffs and monitoring the inhabitants. Uruk alone covered more than 550 ha and could therefore no longer maintain its former status as an independent agricultural city.[40] It developed into a central city, forcing the surrounding settlements to supply it and therefore exploiting them.[41] This led to the typical "capital city" syndrome and the first bureaucratic state. All these problems together brought about fundamental changes in society, which, albeit unintentionally, increasingly adopted the *patriarchal patterns of a society based on domination.*[42]

The concept of the political unity of the country and the idea of the "king of the country" now emerged in Sumer, in order to restrain the permanent conflicts ←324 | 325→between the cities. This meant a further step towards centralization. Since the individual city states did not want to voluntarily cede their territory to such a self-proclaimed sovereign, they began to conquer each other. Larger territories were created by the forced merger of several city states; these were attempts to establish regional states which, however, did not survive their founders. Finally, it was Lugal-Zagesi, King of Umma, who called himself "King of the Land," reigning over all of Sumer for a short period and quite immodestly claiming dominance over "all foreign countries from sunrise to sunset."[43]

What emerged among the Sumerians as merely an idea combined with various failed attempts was finally completed by the Semitic King Sargon of Akkad (2292–2236) (Fig. 4). He knew how to wage war better than anyone before him, and defeated Lugal-Zagesi in battle, uniting Mesopotamia to form a forcibly united empire.[44] He established himself as the central government and replaced Sumerian with Semitic as the official national language, making himself the first “ruler” worthy of the name.

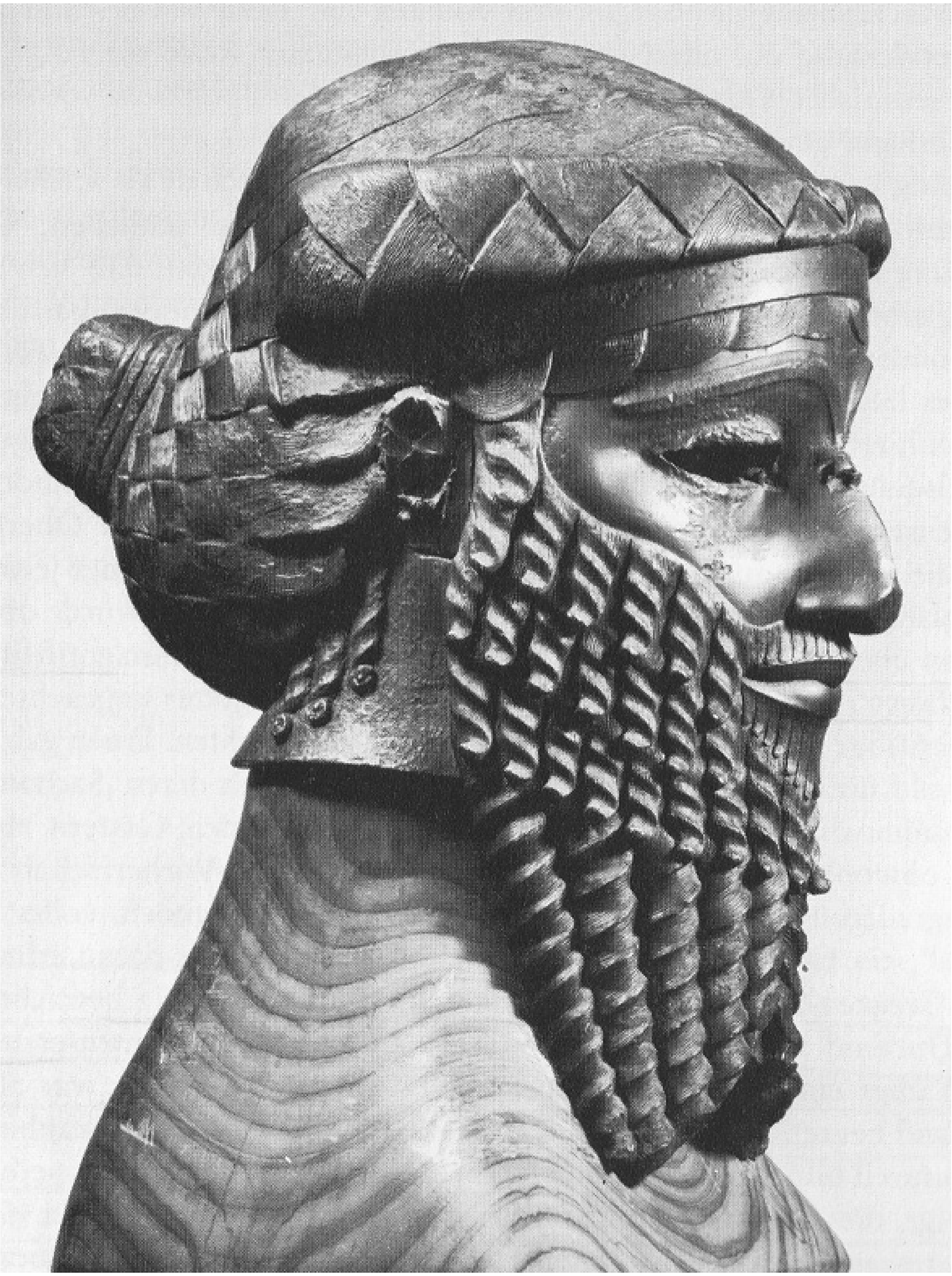


Fig. 4: Bronze head of an Akkadian ruler, probably Sargon of Akkad, Ishtar temple of Ninive (Assyria)

However, Sumer’s subjugation was only a prelude for Sargon because he seriously intended to conquer “all foreign countries from sunrise to sunset.” First, ←325 | 326→he occupied the eastern Elam (Susiana) and the Persian highlands, also subjugating the region around Ninive at the upper Tigris. Then he occupied North Mesopotamia (North Iraq) and Syria, advancing as far as Anatolia and Lebanon. He is also said to have invaded the countries in the Persian Gulf region. With this he had founded, for the first time, a vast *conquest-based empire as a military state,* which encompassed all of Mesopotamia and its neighboring countries.[45] For this achievement he deified himself, for the propaganda of the time states that the people had made him a god because of his victorious fights. He had himself depicted as a ruler with the triple horned crown, the highly symbolic tiara of the goddesses and gods of Sumer, thereby degrading a most sacred symbol.[46]

This led Sargon into conflict with the priesthood, for with self-deification he not only insulted the deities, but also seized the treasures and land owned by the temples. He and his successors also had to deal with continual, violent uprisings by the Sumerian cities, which did not accept these profound changes in the political situation, bringing the central power to the verge of collapse several times. In addition, the distribution of water was prone to conflict as there was never enough, since it could be regulated much better locally than by a central government. The priesthood of the various city deities therefore became natural champions of the cities’ struggle for independence.[47] These numerous internal conflicts, however, led to even more military campaigns by the rulers as, according to the patriarchal logic of the formation of empires, new external enemies had to constantly be found to divert attention from the internal difficulties of such empires based on conquest. This was the only way for the central power to assert itself. Equally important was the exploitation of the subjugated countries in the border areas, whose raw materials were appropriated and monopolized in order to preserve the overpopulated center of the empire and simultaneously the power of the central government.

In this way, with Sargon began the endless history of patriarchal military empires with their potential for internal and external violence, that is, the oppression of their own people and the exploitation of other peoples, leading to continued internal and external social misery. Only the ruler and his faithful—the "elite" who has finally entered history—led a splendid life, together with the hierarchical enforcement staff of the controlling and disciplinary authorities. This is *classic patriarchy* and it was first invented here.

←326 | 327→This whole development shows that domination patterns and patriarchal patterns are identical because every patriarchy is a dominance-based society. Essentially it is based on dominance over women, because without them it would not survive until the next generation. It is also based on dominance over most men, foreign peoples and nature in general. Women as the opposite sex, other men, other peoples and nature have no value per se, but are only regarded as exploitable resources to strengthen the power of domination.

Centralization Pushed to the Extreme: The Path to "World Empire"

After patriarchal, conquering empires were introduced into human history and recognized by rulers as the best state for themselves, combined with the propaganda that this represented the beginning of "civilization," which allegedly had not existed before, the pursuit of such empires did not cease. More and more the patriarchal society of domination, based on war, reared its ugly head.

In Mesopotamia, its borders had, from now on, always to be secured against so-called "savages" from outside the empire, that is, the nomadic peoples from the steppes and deserts who, for their part, saw the expanding Akkadian military empire as a threat. Pressure created counter pressure, and violence led to counter violence. The result was that the Guti mountain people on the eastern flank undertook much dreaded raids into the Akkad Empire, serving their self-defense and supply at the same time.

Along with the rivalry of four kings for the Akkadian throne and simultaneous mass rebellion of the Sumerian city states, the result was finally the collapse of the empire. The Guti overran the empire, destroyed the governmental center, and the Akkadian military state disintegrated. This resulted in considerable chaos until the old city states succeeded in regaining their decentralized power.[48]

But since history can never be turned back, this dream of the "good old days" did not last long. The famous "elite" had acquired a taste for what could be achieved by force of arms, and they now introduced a new central government. In this way the empire of Babylon in Mesopotamia came into being in the 2nd millennium (see Map 8). Skills for ruling were further developed and refined, because that was what it was all about now! The country was divided into administrative districts; garrisons were set up in all districts, keeping the people under military supervision, in order that no more revolts were possible. The previously rebellious priesthood was appeased with the construction of immense temples. ←327 | 328→This was the time of the Ziggurats, which grew to tower-like heights with the corresponding number of terraces—the biblical "Tower of Babel," becoming the symbol of human hubris (Fig. 5). Monumental architecture and oversized art expressed the power of the rulers, and finally they reintroduced self-deification.[49]

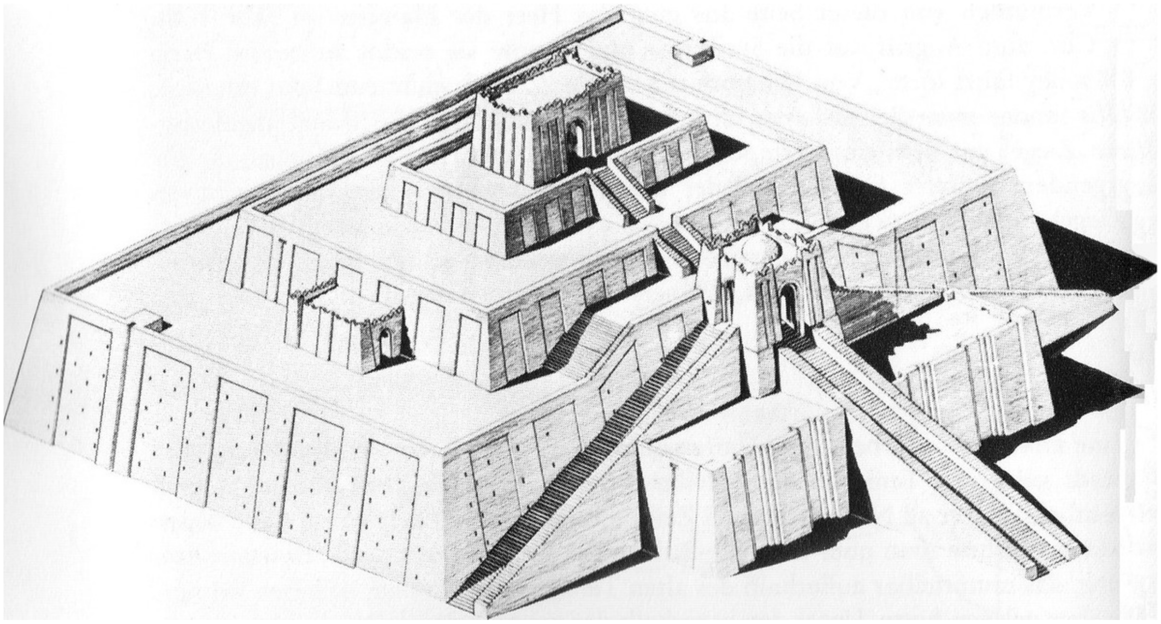


Fig. 5: Reconstruction of a step pyramid with temple, here: Ziggurat of Ur (South Mesopotamia)

An extensive apparatus of state officials was also added because the ecological problems had become even bigger than before: the precious water stored in reservoirs evaporated in these hot countries and the soil became salty. This further restricted crop cultivation, a problem that could only be solved by economic dirigism and total control. The temples and palaces employed large numbers of dependent male and female workers whose duties were precisely laid down. The supervisors of these groups of workers were given the calculations of what the group had to achieve. If deficits arose, they remained as a target for the following year. At the same time, food was rationed even more, with the lowest ranking receiving the least. Below even the lowest class was the new class of prisoners of war, who now constituted the mass of slaves.[50] Thus hierarchization had finally led to a totalitarian class state, even if the rulers of the time did not see it that way, but rather saw themselves as the country’s fatherly patrons. Finally, despite all ←328 | 329→efforts, the south of the empire with its massive cities could no longer feed itself and became dependent on grain imports from the north.

At the same time, this complicated and fragile state structure continuously had border problems with Semitic nomadic tribes who repeatedly attempted to encroach on the empire. A wall was erected against them—another tried and tested means that has continued throughout patriarchal history. As always, the wall was of little use, and so the reign of the Amorites and an Amoritic dynasty arose in Babylon. One ruler from this dynasty was Hammurabi, who reunited Babylon and the neighboring territories under his rule. He became famous through the Hammurabi stele containing legal texts, where laws and strict penalties for all legal cases have been set in stone in cuneiform script.[51] This was not the beginning of judicature, as Hammurabi refers to laws that had already been in place before. Nevertheless, this reveals the nature of the justice in Babylon, where the ruler alone enacts the laws and determines the punishments (legislative power), at the same time being the supreme judge (judicial power) and also holding the executive power, exercised through his soldiers and officials. There was no distribution of powers, and in this respect, *justice was structural violence* that equated power and law. It had less to do with justice than with being another instrument of patriarchal domination.

During this time, completely new methods of warfare were invented, which the north of Mesopotamia used against the desperately overpopulated south when fighting for independence from the new central government. The settlements in the north dug their own canals, which meant that the south received less water. Occasionally, the grain supply was cut off, or water was taken away from Babylon completely, simply by not repairing the dams so that the water could leak away—a most effective ecological weapon. This led to inflation and famine in the south and to new internal wars. In the long run, it weakened the central government to such an extent that the Babylonian Empire collapsed. Finally, a raid by the Indo-European Hittites destroyed the now powerless Babylon, and it became the short-term prey of various Semitic tribes until it was swallowed up by the Assyrian Empire.[52]

All these peoples tried to build empires by conquest as vast territorial states, this being partly a survival strategy, partly due to greed for power and domination. Finally, the Semitic Assyrians most successfully continued this disastrous development and took it to its extreme. The Assyrian expansion project began ←329 | 330→in the second half of the 2nd millennium, and started in North Mesopotamia from the plains at the upper Tigris. The Assyrians now possessed iron weapons (from 1,200), which they had learned to make from the Hittites.[53] The reasons behind Assyrian militarism were economic, as the Assyrian heartland was relatively poor. Artificial irrigation was not possible on a large scale because the Tigris had cut into the land too deeply, so they produced relatively few of their own supplies. Even mineral resources could not compensate for the shortage, as they were scarce. The situation drove the Assyrians to conquer and systematically exploit neighboring countries, and a growing army was needed. This army and the massive building works in the capital Assur created yet more demand, so that further conquests were necessary.[54] In this way the empire grew, soon taking over all of Mesopotamia and Babylon, and the spiral of violence increased.

The Assyrians, who had not been spoilt by their austere environment, demonstrated excellent strategic thinking combined with extreme rigor. They ruled with cruelty by torturing the defeated, blinding them in their thousands, spearing them on stakes or cutting off their heads. They took hostages from the elites of the subjugated countries and deported multitudes of peoples to Assyria to weaken those countries.[55] The rulers called themselves “Kings of Kings” and legitimized their warlike expansion strategy with religion. The city god Assur was declared the god of empire and war, who allegedly commanded the conquests and went before the army, while the king proved through continued military campaigns that he had the god’s blessing.[56] Thus every war became a “holy war,” and religion now also served the patriarchal ideology, an unfortunate role which it never got rid of.

In the later Iron Age (1st millennium), the Neo-Assyrian “World Empire” finally came into being. It was brought about by ceaseless war campaigns and new war techniques, namely iron weapons and chariots. The chariot, which had been invented in and spread through the Eurasian steppes, was perfected by the Assyrians. While the former military kings in Mesopotamia had been content with cumbersome, four-wheeled chariots drawn by the local onagers (half-donkeys), now horses and light chariots had arrived on the scene through the metal trade from the north via Persia to ←330 | 331→Mesopotamia.[57] The Assyrians transformed the chariot into a three-horse carriage, making it the most dangerous weapon of the time (Fig. 6). They had heavy siege machines that no city wall could withstand, and were also building fast army roads and military bases at all locations. The contemporary peoples were so afraid of this highly armed Assyrian force that they were willing to pay tribute “voluntarily” as soon as it appeared in their area. Permanent war brought the rulers great wealth through booty, tributes, and slaves, and they continually enlarged their armies with troops from the conquered lands.[58] All these measures were invented here for the first time and have been copied many times, also by the Romans in their later military empire.

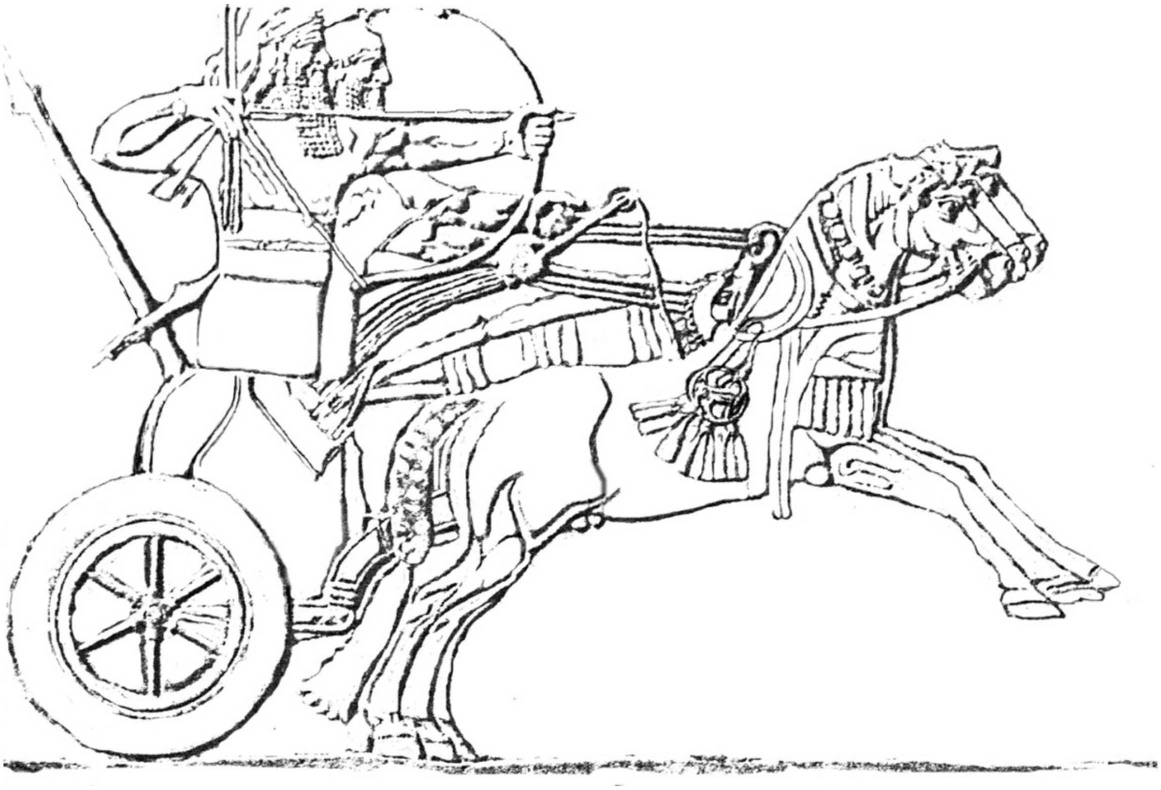


Fig. 6: Assyrian king on a chariot drawn by three horses (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after a stone relief from Nimrud)

Under King Assurbanipal, the vast empire was at its height and encompassed the then known world. In the west it extended as far as Syria-Palestine, in the north to East Anatolia, in the northeast to Persia and in the southwest to Egypt. Egypt was attacked, and the continuous fights to defend the country were in vain. Finally, the Assyrians had conquered Lower Egypt in the Nile Delta, and the Pharaoh was forced to flee to Upper Egypt. But the glory didn’t last long. The former enemies, Babylon and the Persian Elam, attacked simultaneously, and the Neo-Assyrian capital, Nineveh, fell. In the course of just seven years Assurbanipal’s world empire had entirely collapsed.[59]

The reasons for this rapid fall lie in the empire’s extreme centralization, focused on just one ruler and one capital. In this case, the increasing centralism had reduced itself to absurdity. Such an expansive system can only choose between either further expansion or collapse, but continued expansion cannot work in the long run. It is opposed by natural boundaries such as seas and mountains, as well as the limits of manageability. The administrative personnel had long been overburdened so that even the heart of the empire, with the old capital of Assur and the new, gigantic city of Nineveh (700 ha), had no more strength for defense. The most serious problem, however, was that a system of spoils and tributes based solely on consumption is not a sustainable economic system.[60]

These reasons are more or less valid for the decline of all patriarchal empires and “world empires,” which emerged and passed away in rapid succession after this first example, with the loss of millions of lives. They owed their emergence to the same principles of domination and exploitation invented in Mesopotamia, and their demise to the instability of these patterns as a result of the quest for limitless expansion and maximization. The same patterns can still be seen today, but now it is the Earth itself, as a limited planet, that will finally put an end to it.

Bronze Age Social Order and Religion in West Asia: From Thea-Cracy to the Abolition of the Goddess

Late Matriarchal Thea-Cracy

Egalitarian societies can be assumed for the entire epoch of the Copper Stone Age from Hassuna to Ubaid (6th-4th millennium) as no archaeological evidence has been found in these cultures for leaders, chieftains, or ruling elites. Since they originate directly from the matriarchal societies of the Fertile Crescent, there is no reason not to assume, in addition, a matriarchal order with women in the central position. Based on the Samarra culture, it has become obvious that it was not the development of artificial irrigation that led to the first patriarchal ←332 | 333→patterns, but rather the later, significantly denser settlement and the increasingly scarce water supply in South Mesopotamia. This led to growing control and centralization, combined with conquests by patriarchalized peoples from outside. This was how the patriarchal societies of domination in the Bronze Age and Iron Age came about (3rd-1st millennium). First changes in the old, egalitarian social order can be seen in the early Sumerian city states, resulting in a stratified society which, nevertheless, did not mean that matriarchal patterns were abandoned. We can therefore take a closer look at the internal conditions of these societies, as well as looking at the role played by religion, since social order and religion were still closely interwoven for the early Sumerians.

The status of women in the matriarchal cultures of early Mesopotamian, that is, the Hassuna, Halaf, and Samarra cultures, was based on their importance as providers in horticulture and agriculture, on their creation of the social order through the mother-line, and on their religious significance as the rebirthers of the ancestors. When their clans lost the land that had sustained them economically and had linked them religiously to the places of their ancestors, at first the situation of women became precarious. The migration of the Samarra people to the south represented a disturbance for them, as they had been forced to leave their ancestral places and irrigation systems due to an external cause. But this disruption to their culture did not immediately lead to the abandonment of their social order, which was based on the mother-line. Ethnological examples show that the mother-line is by no means given up quickly, but lasts for a very long time, even under stressful conditions, since it forms the backbone of society.[61] This was probably also the case for the Samarra culture because the people relocated and founded settlements in agricultural land, so the women neither lost the land nor their independence. In principle, it is likely that the men built and maintained the irrigation systems while the women were responsible for the planting. This division of labor can be observed in many actual peoples where it is men's work to prepare the fields, be it with spades or ox ploughs, and to provide irrigation while the women sow or plant the crops and look after them.[62]

The Samarra culture was immediately followed by the Ubaid culture, so that here too matriarchal social conditions can be assumed. Ubaid saw the beginning of the early, egalitarian "temple economy," based on the old pattern of ←333 | 334→community houses with shared supplies. The "temple economy" was supported equally by the economy of women and that of men. In religion and cultic practices, however, women had priority, for they represented the goddess as priestesses and performed her ceremonies, and they were also traditionally prophetesses and healers. Continued finds of sacred female figurines made from precious alabaster suggest this.

Neither did the high status of women change in the early Sumerian cities of Ur, Eridu and Uruk in the 4th millennium. Even in the late epochs of Sumer, with its numerous temples of goddesses, women held the respected positions of priestesses and temple servants. Although the Sumerians were immigrants, they had also inherited the traditions of Ubaid. The origins of the Sumerians remain unknown, but they were unlikely to have brought with them a father-line and father right, for they belonged neither to the warlike Indo-Europeans nor to the patriarchal Semitic herder nomads who later immigrated to Mesopotamia. Equality continued to be practiced in the early Sumerian temple settlements in South Mesopotamia since, apart from the land owned by the temples, peasants and peasant-women could cultivate their own plots. Land as temple “property” existed only in the sense of common land because whatever was gained from it belonged to the community and was stored at the temple.[63] Women played a decisive role in this because, as priestesses, they controlled, counted and safeguarded the community’s goods stored at the temples.[64]

Religious thinking also played an important role here, because the arable land around the city, as well as the city itself with all the people, ultimately belonged to the city deity who lived in the temple and protected the city.[65] This deity symbolized the fertile land; in other words, the city deities were originally female and maternal, like the very old, pre-Sumerian goddess Ninhursag, the “mother of the land” who gave life and death and still had a temple in Sumer. The syllables “Nin/In” and “An/Ana” mean “mother,” and they return in the name of the city goddess of Uruk, “Inanna,” who was worshipped as “Goddess of Heaven and Earth” for over a millennium.[66] Her earliest temples we made of reeds, as ←334 | 335→these are abundant in marshland, and later on a bundle of reeds was regarded as the symbol of Inanna (Fig. 7).

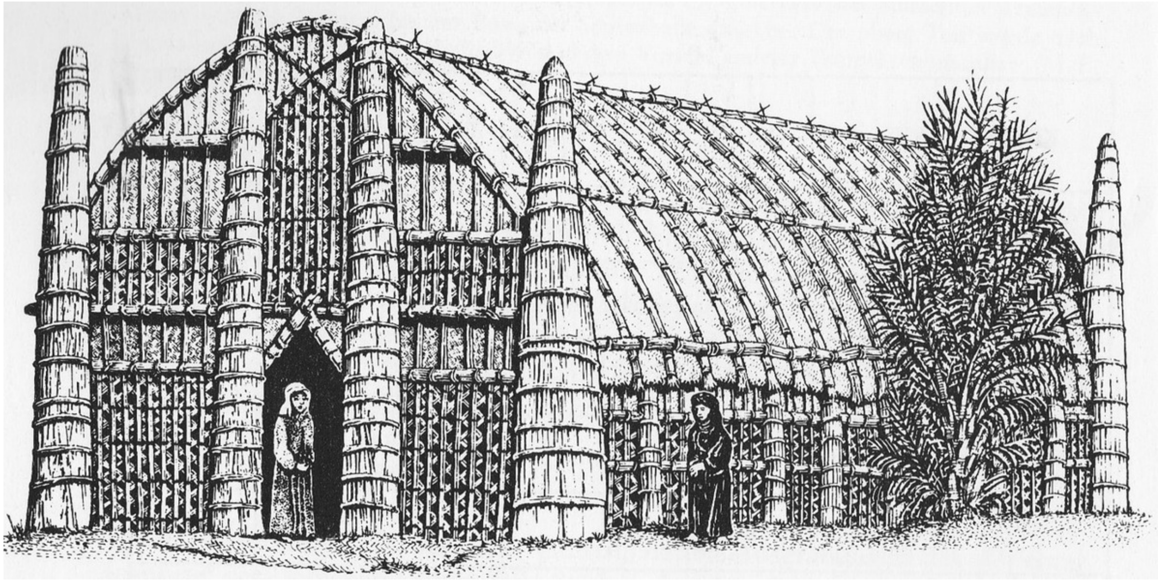


Fig. 7: Guesthouse made of reeds by contemporary people of the marshland (Iraq). The earliest temple of Inanna was constructed using the same traditional reed architecture.

A high priestess, called “entum,” embodied the goddess during the ceremonies, for instance representing the moon goddess Ningal in Ur and the goddess Inanna in Nippur, as well as in Uruk.[67] A first priest, called “en,” was assigned to her, who lived in the temple district and contributed to abundance and prosperity through his service to the goddess. Both were merely religious representatives, not rulers, and their duties were sacred. In particular, the “Sacred Marriage,” a magical ceremony of great importance, was performed by these two representatives. People celebrated the Sacred Marriage in Sumer for at least two thousand years, but the ceremony is older than this culture, being most extensive in West Asia but also on other continents. This ceremony was for the common welfare and had nothing to do with a “celebration of sexuality” or even the “procreation of children.” The belief was grounded in the idea that this ceremony helped to keep heaven and earth in balance, because the city goddess, in the shape of the priestess, reunited with her people, embodied by the priest, in love. This celestial-terrestrial union made the land fertile and the people’s lives happy.[68] Later a priest king, who was called “ensi” in some temple cities, had the same sacred task of becoming the partner of the city goddess in the shape of the priestess. The title “ensi” comes from “en-si-ak,” which means “administrator of the arable land” and, in addition to the priest king’s sacred duties, also indicates his practical duties, in particular his responsibility for maintaining the irrigation channels and the fields together with the men of the city. The people believed that his success was a visible sign the goddess had blessed him while failure meant he was spiritually lacking, reflecting the sacred nature of this office.[69] Only in much later times, when kings saw themselves as profane rulers and sought territorial power through conquest (from 2,700), did the royal title “lugal” emerge, which no longer had any religious significance.[70]

←335 | 336→

This early, matriarchal royalty thus shows no similarity with later autocrats and their violence-based monarchies. The “ensi” formed a part of the community and was its delegate; he was religiously responsible to the city deity and politically responsible to the city council, which consisted of the heads of the households. It is by no means certain that these heads, in the early Sumerian cities, were without exception the “city-fathers,” as has been claimed.[71] These were rather the “city-mothers” who—as is usual in matriarchal societies—did not themselves go to the council meeting, but sent their brothers as elected speakers for the clans. Decisions were made by consensus and had to be approved by the respective clan houses for their delegates. And once the city council had decided in consensus with all the clan houses, the king could not change anything.[72]

We call this form of society *late matriarchal* because the social order is still free from domination and, as far as the sexes are concerned, egalitarian. Special ranks existed, such as the High Priestess and the Priest King, as religious representatives. However, these ranks did not imbue any power and did not represent domination, as is very often mistakenly assumed. It is a “ranked society” ←336 | 337→ with purely honorary positions that cannot be set in stone. Only when ranks are turned into permanent positions and become inheritable does hierarchy emerge as a fixed, problematic pattern. This political form of a ranked society with a High Priestess and a Priest King was called a “theo-cracy” and was generally assumed for early Sumerian society.[73] But such a term is inappropriate in this case; it would be more correctly described as a “thea-cracy,” relating to goddesses and a matriarchal context. A system only becomes theo-cratic when male gods and priests dominate and women are excluded from the official religious sphere. In this case, society is based on the rule of priests and the oppression of women, which is a completely different system because it is patriarchal.

Breaking with Matriarchal Religion

The situation changed in the Bronze Age (end of the 4th millennium and beginning of the 3rd millennium), when rapid growth in the population of South Mesopotamia led to great problems and increasing centralization. This was the time of the Uruk expansion. Here we are concerned with the question of how control over women, who are not a minority but half of society, could have emerged, both now and in later epochs of Mesopotamia. Patriarchal societies are essentially based on the control and oppression of women, so their hierarchy is by no means neutral, but has a different effect on women than on men.

During the Uruk expansion, the canal system was extended and organized by the city states, and at the same time the area used for crops was reduced to save water. The independent households of the peasant clans in the villages ceased to exist or had to shrink considerably in order to comply with the state regulations. Sons and daughters moved into the cities, as well as whole clans as they could no longer live off their plots of land. They found a secure but dependent livelihood at the workshops in the temple district of the cities. Here the men carried out various crafts, the women were mostly spinners and weavers in the textile industry. This development had fatal consequences for the old, matriarchal clan structure, which under these circumstances could no longer be maintained and dissolved. Instead, small family units emerged in the cities.

←337 | 338→Nevertheless, a form of marriage was preserved which shows some matriarchal patterns. Here the young couple didn’t share a residence, the wife staying in her mother’s house and the husband also staying with her family for a short time or permanently as a guest. In this type of marriage, the woman retained great autonomy and managed her inherited property herself, which could be considerable. She was able to have two legitimate husbands as well as lovers. Divorce was also relatively easy for her—showing that women still enjoyed freedom and indicating that the mother-line in this small unit continued. In Sumer this kind of marriage developed later into one concluded by means of a written contract, which still gave some rights to the wife.[74]

But women lost their central social position along with the loss of land and the clan community. In addition, the hierarchical management of the irrigation system was exclusively in male hands. This was not deliberate, but resulted from the traditional division of labor, according to which it was the duty of men to dig and preserve the canals. Unintentionally, this led to the superiority of male activity, and a progressive decline in the importance of women’s work ensued. For example, illustrations on stamp seals from Uruk show men in leading positions and important occupations, while women no longer appear except in faceless groups, doing repetitive work such as spinning, weaving, pottery and food production.[75] This led to the men of the city council increasingly taking decisions on their own, because matriarchal clans, to whom they had previously been responsible, existed less and less. At the same time, the hierarchy of officials became more influential as it provided the state with the resource on which everything else depended: precious water.

However, such developments did not lead directly to the father’s rights being paramount, as woman were still highly respected as a mother and the children may still have belonged to her following the mother-line. The equivalence of women, at least in the wealthy middle class, is evidenced by the “sculptures of prayers,” among which equal numbers of female prayer statues have been found (see Fig. 3). The cult of goddesses flourished, their temples were often visited and richly gifted, especially the goddess Inanna of Uruk, whose importance grew along with the expansion of Uruk until she became the supra-regional Great Goddess of Sumer. But male city gods also emerged and were given magnificent ←338 | 339→temple buildings. Various goddesses were assigned male counterparts, such as the air goddess Ninlil of the city of Nippur, with the air god Enlil, and the moon goddess Ningal of the city of Ur, with the moon god Nanna. Some originally female deities also were masculinized, for example “An/Anu” became the sky god of Uruk, although this syllable means “mother.”[76] The priestesses of the goddesses were joined by priests for the gods, and religion became strictly institutionalized.[77]

Two myths from Sumer are noteworthy in this context. First, the myth of Inanna and Dumuzi: Dumuzi is explicitly said to have been a “shepherd.” Inanna was supposed to elevate him to her priest king through the magical ceremony of Sacred Marriage, but Inanna refuses. Instead, she wants the “peasant” to be her partner. Her preference for a peasant is justified, because she is the goddess of an urban farming culture. Finally, her mother Ningal, the moon goddess, advises her to accept the shepherd, and the daughter follows her mother’s advice and celebrates the Sacred Marriage with Dumuzi.[78]–

Realistic political processes lie behind this myth. At the time of the Uruk expansion, Sumerians came into contact with the old, sheep-breeding cultures in the northern areas of Mesopotamia, with whom they wanted to get on well for reasons of trade. These people are represented by the “shepherd” Dumuzi, who is peacefully integrated into Sumerian culture by the high-priestess of Uruk, who personifies Inanna. It is a fine example of the typically matriarchal marriage policy which, in this case, could still succeed because Dumuzi’s cultural background was a matriarchal, sheep-breeding culture. This is evident from the fact that Dumuzi keeps the herds of his mother and sister, not his own; the economy is therefore in the hands of the women. Also, no mention is made of Dumuzi’s “father” in the myth; instead he has a strong bond with his mother and sister. His sister feels so responsible for her brother that she even helps him out of the underworld by taking his place there, which shows the typically matriarchal, close sister-brother relationship.[79] Through Inanna’s decision, Dumuzi became ←339 | 340→the Shepherd King of Uruk and experienced the ancient goddess religion first-hand, consisting of the traditional ceremonies of Sacred Marriage, Descent into the Underworld and Happy Return/Rebirth from the Deep.[80] Here we can see that the matriarchal worldview is still intact in the religious field.

It is completely different when the goddess Inanna meets Gilgamesh, as the second myth from Sumer shows.[81] Written evidence exists of Gilgamesh as an early dynastic king of Uruk in the 3rd millennium, so we are dealing with reality again.[82] In this myth a rupture can be observed, as happened with the invasion of the warlike Semitic tribes, the Akkadians, when there was political, social and psychological upheaval in Sumer that led to the turmoil of the Early Dynastic period. Gilgamesh probably acquired the throne of Uruk with violence, because he belongs to the Akkadians, who occupied several Sumerian cities. Now, like all kings, he bears the title “Shepherd” in the sense of the “Great Shepherd of the People,” but he is very different from the gentle Dumuzi. He relies purely on his strength and weapons and solves any problem with violence, which is considered a heroic deed, such as the destruction of an ancient mountain sanctuary right at the beginning of his government. He no longer lives in the temple district, but in his own palace. When Inanna, who now bears the Akkadian name “Ishtar,” invites him to the ceremony of Sacred Marriage according to old custom—presumably also with the intention of a matriarchal marriage policy—, he mocks her and slays her holy heavenly bull, the ancient symbol of the moon goddess, whose daughter she is. Thus, the Sacred Marriage does not take place. He turns against his own people with equal severity, tearing sons from fathers and forcing the men to build mighty walls around Uruk. No woman is safe from him; he does not let brides meet their lovers, nor does he respect the daughters of warriors or the wives of nobles. The city council complains, but he no longer respects it; instead he acts according to his own self-importance. However, since he has also broken with the goddess, he cannot experience rebirth through her so that, in the end, he is confronted with a death with no return. Even death he wants to heroically “defeat,” but it is in vain.[83]

Here we can see an abrupt renunciation of the ancient matriarchal religion, which is destroyed in all its aspects. The androcentric view of the Early Dynastic period no longer recognizes the goddess and the cyclic view of the world. The bleak, early patriarchal notion of eternal death in an underworld of shadows takes the place of holy love with the goddess and a belief in rebirth. It is all about power and glory, which becomes manifest in monumental buildings, and thus the life of the people becomes also unbalanced. With the Akkadians the father-line seems to have arrived in Mesopotamia, indicated by the assertion that Gilgamesh “tears sons from fathers,” as well as the right of the strongest, who regards women only as objects of his desire. Equality between the sexes and equality between king and citizens is destroyed, because Gilgamesh rules as a tyrant. In this sense, the Gilgamesh epic with its contempt for the feminine and the goddess religion reflects a completely new attitude—it is no coincidence that the protagonist, the first “hero” of literature, is still praised today as an idol of male self-glorification.

Class Society and the Diminishing Status of Women

Such literature illustrates the change in the mentality and social order of the time. The Akkadian warrior kings in their cities on the northern border of Sumer knew no temple economy and always lived in their own palaces. Having conquered the throne in a Sumerian city, they profaned the sacred kingship in their battles for the territorial state. In Sumer the king used to be a zealous servant of the city goddess, whose influence was based on the correct practice of religion and the consensus of the citizens’ council. In Akkad the king now became the head of a bureaucracy of officials who served no longer a deity, but him zealously, and he always had the last word. The citizens’ council was no longer valid; they no longer could make political decisions. It is because the king was also the head of the military, his staff of enforcement, which he used to get what he wanted. In addition, the Semitic Akkadians had brought with them the father-line and father right, with far-reaching negative consequences for the situation of women. The Akkadians had developed these social patterns as a people of nomadic herder warriors from the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula; they came about with them in a similar way as with the Eurasian Indo-Europeans. These new structures were now in force, and they were based on power, patrilineal genealogy and father right.[84]

←341 | 342→A *society with strict social hierarchy* increasingly developed, whereby the boundaries of the different classes could no longer be crossed. The king and the military were at the top. Under them was the upper class of patricians, including the high officials and priests, while citizens made up the middle class. In these classes, the father-line and father right were largely enforced through strict monogamy for the women, but not for the men. Wives were regarded as limited equals and still had some property rights over their dowry, which they were meant to safeguard and increase not for themselves but for their sons. Wives were dependent on their husbands, who provided for them and controlled their sexuality and fertility, which meant their isolation and confinement: for the prime duty of wives was to give birth to their husband's sons. This shows to what extent these women, who were regarded as "free" citizens, were objectified and instrumentalized for the purposes of their husbands. Semitic patriarchal marriage—in contrast to the Sumerians' late matriarchal marriage—was a marriage by purchase, in which a bride price was paid by the father of the groom for the bride. After that the wife lived in her husband's house, totally dependent on what he provided for her, and if she had any possessions, these were also supervised by the husband. It was almost impossible for a woman to secure a divorce.[85]

The lower classes consisted of the male and female wage earners in the cities who had once been free peasants. With the increased centralization of the canal system, the last villages and independent households disappeared, and the last female and male peasants became impoverished and hopelessly in debt. According to the new laws, their creditors could pledge them or sell them as debt slaves, so they became bonds-people tied to their new masters, and therefore with a status even lower than the working class. In this way, the women became domestic servants and the concubines of rich men. They were the most defenseless and sank to the lowest level of this exploitative hierarchy.[86]

With the formation of empires in the following epochs (3rd and 2nd millennium), such as the empire of King Sargon of Akkad and the Babylonian empire, and the associated continual wars and conquests, the status of women sank even further. At this time, it was important to ensure strict internal order, and a new ←342 | 343→balance of power between husband and wife was therefore established. This can be derived from the Code of Law of Hammurabi, King of Babylon (1,760 BCE). Patriarchal marriage was now generally enforced, that is, the wife and children belonged legally to the husband, as his property. The father of the family had the power to kill newborns he did not like, mostly little daughters. He had the right to arrange marriages for his sons and daughters, and the bride price he received for a daughter helped him to raise the bride price for a son's future wife. "Virginity" in the sense of sexual innocence of the daughter was a prerequisite, which is why she was keenly guarded by her brothers. If she had lost her "virginity," she was worthless to the family. No man would pay a bride price for her, as it was important for each man to recognize "his own" children because of his father-line. As punishment, the father could pledge or sell the daughter as a slave. This concern for the "virginity" of the daughter led to the regulation that a father could marry off his daughter in early childhood against payment of a bride price. The girl was chosen by the bridegroom's father and, from then on, lived in her father-in-law's household to serve as a maid until the wedding. Sexual abuse by the father-in-law was not excluded; it could be punished but could rarely be proven. The father was allowed to do all this without the consent of his wife or children. In fact, he was so powerful he could even use his wife and children as pledges to creditors in an emergency. If he failed to pay his debts, they too were turned into debt slaves or bondspeople. The mistreatment of a male debt slave was punishable by law, while Hammurabi's laws say nothing about female debt slaves.

The husband also had the right to take a concubine, whom he could buy as a slave. The wife had to tolerate the concubine, who was now her servant. If a concubine gave birth to children, especially sons, they were considered legitimate children of the family's father. The husband was allowed to commit adultery with prostitutes and female slaves, in other words, he lived polygamously, while the wife owed absolute loyalty to her husband—a typical consequence of the always uncertain father-line. If a woman did commit adultery, she was punished by death, and the husband could also kill her lover with impunity, as the latter was considered a mean thief of the husband's property, the wife.[87] All in all, this shows that the sexuality and procreative ability of middle-class women were now under total control by men; women had sunk to the status of a commodity and were merely the object of financial transactions between men.

As a result of military conquests and looting in foreign countries, a new class subsequently emerged which ranked even lower than the local debt slaves: enslaved prisoners of war. Whereas local debt slaves still had a vague prospect of being released, the situation was hopeless for enslaved prisoners because, as “prey,” they were regarded merely as objects possessed by the victors. It is noticeable that the overwhelming majority of these prisoners were women, because male prisoners were killed as they were warriors and still dangerous. Also, the military could not provide enough personnel to guard them. When men were nevertheless taken as prisoners, they were blinded or mutilated, although only to the extent that they could still do some work. Female prisoners of war were always raped in order to “dishonor” them, in other words, to break their self-esteem and thereby also enslave them psychologically. Finally, they were branded on their faces so that everyone could see their “dishonorable” condition. Many were sent as spinners and weavers to the temples, where they and their working children were particularly badly treated.[88] Others were sold on the market to do hard work in the households of their mistresses. They were property without rights and sexually available to their masters without any restriction, and could also be offered to a guest for sexual use or sold into prostitution. We can see here that the slavery of women is the oldest kind of slavery and formed the basis and model for every kind of slavery since.[89] But it is not only the oldest; it has also lasted the longest, as women are still sold into prostitution as sex objects today.[90]

With its militarized society, the legal system was interpreted even more strictly in the Assyrian Empire than in Babylon. This also regulated women’s sexuality, with the state also establishing how women should dress, with an obligation to wear a veil, a custom that was probably already spread, but now became law.[91] The wives and unmarried daughters of male citizens, as well as widows, were now legally obliged to cover their heads when they went out into public, while women as slaves were not allowed to cover theirs. In this way, the veil became a sign of an "honorable" woman and a privilege. It indicated that the woman belonged sexually to only one man or was under his protection, which means his control, as a daughter or widow. Such women were considered "respectable." The concubine of a household was also allowed to wear a veil when she went out into the street ←344 | 345→accompanying her mistress, carrying her chair or other objects behind her. She, too, was under the protection of the father of the family and was his property, and therefore could not be touched. Female slaves, on the other hand, had to remain unveiled so that their slave brand marks and "dishonorable" condition could be recognized immediately. This also applied to prostitutes. These women were regarded as "public" in the sense of them being unprotected, "without a master," like stray dogs, and therefore at the mercy of the men they met.[92]

At the same time, this law established severe penalties for those who did not abide by it. If a female slave were caught wearing a veil, her clothes would be torn off and her ears cut off. A prostitute with a veil was threatened to be beaten and tar poured over her head, which could only be removed by cutting off all her hair. These harsh sentences were imposed and carried out publicly because these women had pretended to be "respectable" although they were not.[93] Such drastic punishments would have been astonishing if it had merely been a matter of breaking a rule of decency, but there was more to them than that. It was about classifying women into "honorable" and "dishonorable" ones, into "good" and "bad" ones, which definitely and permanently separated them from one another. The division of women based on whether they belonged to different classes, whose borders they were not allowed to cross, was in the direct interest of the totalitarian state. It was a means of domination to keep half the population in every state, namely the women, in check.[94] In this way they were positioned against each other but according to male norms. Over time, such divisions were deeply internalized by women in patriarchal societies, destroying their solidarity with one another and shaping their attitudes to this day.

The question remains as to whether the situation of upper-class women was better. These still appeared as priestesses and prophetesses of the goddesses, as scribes, musicians and singers in the temples and were highly respected. As princesses and queens, they belonged directly to the circle of the powerful and rulers, and were therefore women with an exceptional status.

But even in the upper class the father of a family would arrange his daughters' marriages, above all to form alliances that would improve his own social and financial situation. Fathers could also consecrate their daughters to a life of chastity serving the temple in order to obtain the blessings of the gods and other advantages ←345 | 346→(Fig. 8).[95] These women by no means chose their position themselves, but were pledged by their families, although they could take advantage of their position with some intelligence. As priestesses they lived more or less in monastic seclusion in the temple districts, and had to safeguard their chastity and good reputation. Together with the lower female temple servants and the craftsmen and artists, their function was to create a pleasant life for the deities they served, for it was believed that the gods and goddesses actually lived in the temples. They carefully prepared the daily meals for the deities, arranged their beds, sang and played music for their entertainment, and also served the deities sexually. For a high priestess who was married to a male god believed that the god visited her erotically in the night.

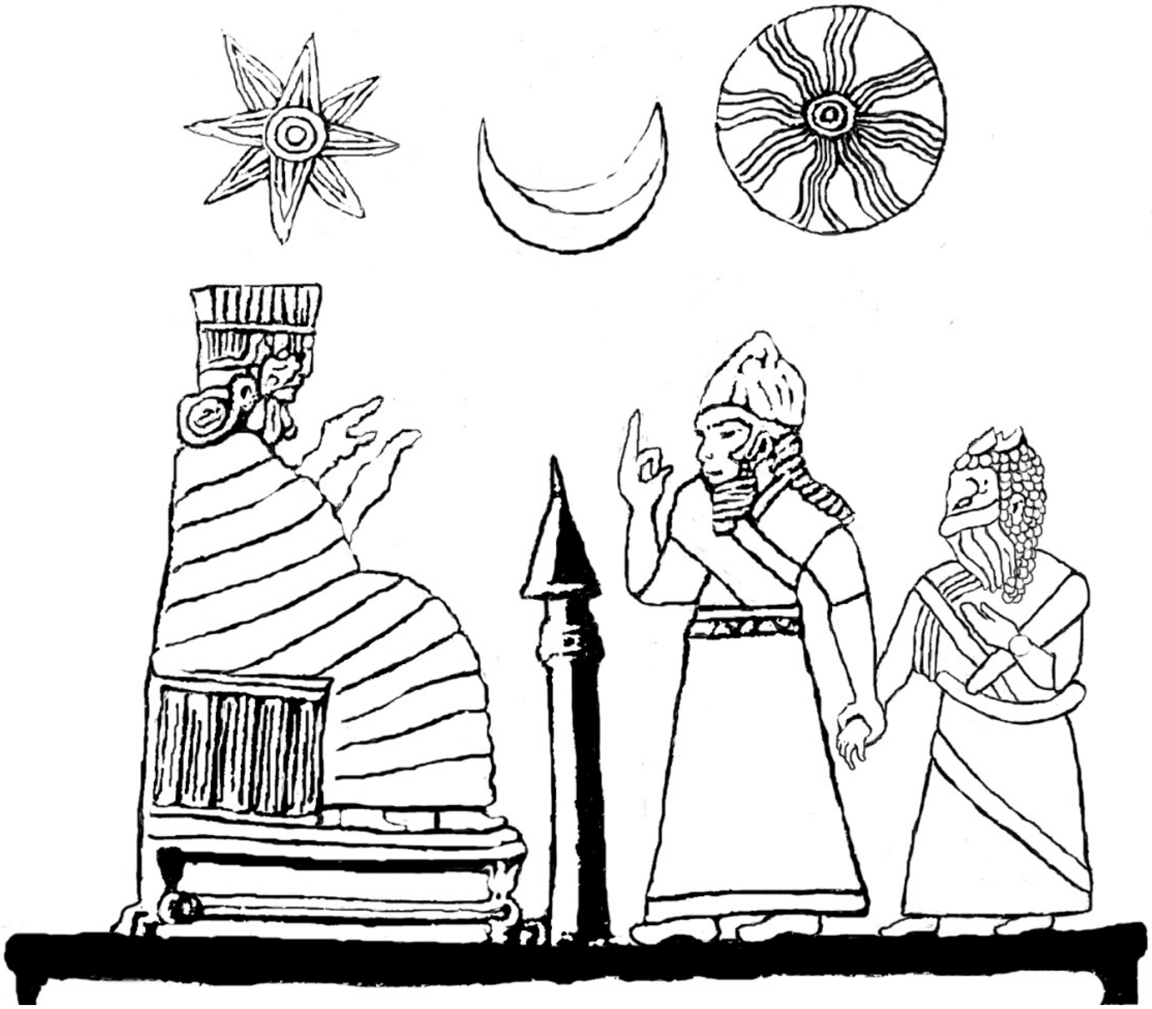


Fig. 8: A king dedicates his daughter, who is half-veiled, to the moon god. The god is sitting on a throne, above him Venus as an eight-pointed star, the crescent, and the sun. (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after a stone relief from Susa)

High priestesses, who always came from the royal clan, embodied the goddess in the ceremony of the Sacred Marriage. Other priestesses and priests also took part in religious sexuality at these feasts, which was still considered sacred ←346 | 347→and healing for the country. The military kings, however, no longer took part, for they were busy exercising the power which the priestesses and priests no longer possessed. These cult forms of love were very old, and they have nothing to do with the so-called "temple prostitution."[96] Temple prostitution came into being relatively late (2nd and 1st millennium), was commercially motivated and flourished in the surroundings of the temples. Prostitution as a business was a consequence of the impoverishment of women in the lowest classes.[97]

The rulers of later epochs also used to place their sisters and daughters as high priestesses, so they could pray for the monarch’s long life and his success in governing and waging war. In particular, they served to make the king’s strict laws ideologically acceptable to the people, the priestesses passing them off as coming from the deities. One example of this is the famous poetess Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon of Akkad. She helped him to communicate his new, centralist imperial order to the Sumerian south and make it acceptable.[98] Thus these royal women acted merely as representatives of their powerful fathers or brothers and supported the increasing patriarchalization, especially against other women.

If they were not given to the temple, royal women were married to other powerful men and foreign kings to pledge an alliance and to influence them in line with their fathers’ intentions. If a woman was lucky enough to have become queen in her home city state or empire, she acted as vice-regent for her husband during his frequent absences at times of war. She heard the reports from the leading officials, carried out royal sacrifices, supervised the oracles and filled the king’s harem with beautiful female slaves. She would give her royal lord a detailed report and, supervised by the court officials, carried out his instructions.[99] However, despite their high position and service to the state or empire, these exceptional women had no authority of their own. As wives, they were dependent on the sexual pleasure they gave their husbands, and could be replaced at any time by another woman.

This shows that women in the patriarchal states of Mesopotamia were defined, without exception, by their sexuality, albeit in different ways. Their sexuality and ability to give birth were subject to male control in all classes of society. They were subjected to the same hierarchy of domination and exploitation as most men, but ←347 | 348→ for them this hierarchy was determined not only by economic but also by sexual dependence. A lack of sexual freedom applied to women in general, even if the specific forms of their sexual dependence differed. This power gap between men and women was not only the case in late Mesopotamia, it has continued for thousands of years in all states and empires based on patriarchy.

The Fate of the Goddesses

With the increasing centralization in the states of Mesopotamia, the theological construct of hierarchies of deities emerged. This was due to an attempt to unite the different deities of the individual cities supra-regionally under one system, as well as being a question of superordination and subordination, as in the state. According to patriarchal patterns, the transformation of formerly independent goddesses into wives and daughters was of utmost importance in order to place male gods above them. The sex change of ancient goddesses to male gods also occurred. In this respect, the hierarchy of deities represented a patriarchal clan, and the priests developed a pantheon that reflected their own social order. A political weighting was added, for the male gods of the dominant cities, more rarely a female city goddess, were made supreme deities to whom the others were subordinated. This new relationship of the deities, which had not existed before, was cultivated by the priests through mutual visits by ship.[100]

In this hierarchical pantheon, the sky god An/Anu became the supreme lord of Uruk, and two primordial goddesses were supposedly his wives: Ki/Urasch, the earth goddess, and Nammu, the goddess of water depths. Nammu was originally regarded as the creatrix and mother of everything, similar to the Babylonian Tiamat, and Ki, the earth goddess, was her daughter. If we assume that “Anu” was once a sky goddess and mother, then the threefold Great Goddess that resides in the three spheres of the world can be seen in this triad. She reigns over Heaven, Earth and Underworld, and the Underworld must not always be located in the depth of the earth, but can also be in the depths of the sea. Thus Anu, Ki and

Nammu once represented the matriarchal trinity as it has been discovered everywhere in the mythologies of West Asia, the Mediterranean and Europe.[101]

In spite of this late, ruling sky god with the usurped name “An/Anu,” the city goddess of Uruk, Inanna, had a special career. Her advance is not only due to Uruk becoming the largest city in Sumer, but especially to the time of the ←348 | 349→ Uruk expansion, when this city influenced the whole region peacefully, as far as North Mesopotamia. This reflects the myth of Inanna’s empowerment by Enki, the god of wisdom, in the ancient city of Eridu—but Enki was not wise enough and Inanna was able to outsmart him. Both drank the holy drink of beer in competition, until the old Enki, drunk and bewitched by the beauty of the goddess, offered her all of the “me,” that is, the magic and arts of the world, which he kept as sacred tablets from all the temples of Sumer. Inanna accepted them without hesitation and brought the holy tablets on her heavenly boat to Uruk. In this way, she became the Great Goddess of Sumer, thereby expressing the superiority of the city of Uruk at the time (Fig. 9).[102]

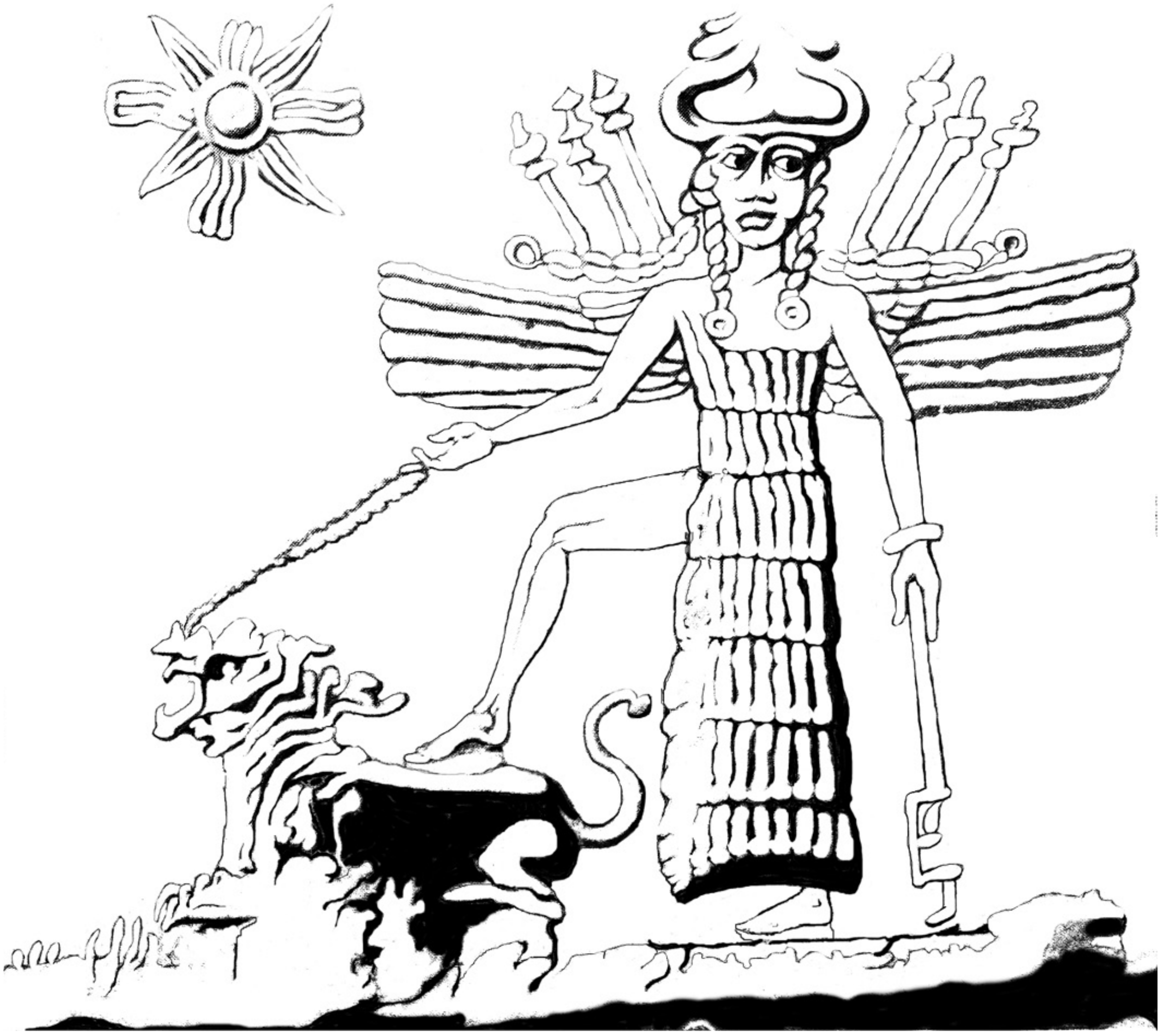


Fig. 9: The goddess Inanna with the triple horn crown and wings; she is wearing a seven-layered robe, and has one foot on her holy animal, the lion. Above her radiates Venus as an eight-pointed star, the planet (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after a roll-seal from Sumer)

←349 | 350→

Later, the cult of the goddess Inanna, in Akkadian called "Ishtar," flourished vigorously in those epochs when women were faced with increasing restriction and control. They turned to the goddess and her priestesses in their growing despair, driven by oppression, poverty, need and disease. Here they sought refuge and pleaded for help. Men of the lower classes also turned to the goddess when debt and bondage weighed heavily on them. Believers would bring offerings such as food, oil and wine to the temple, but especially the symbol of the vulva, which was sometimes made from precious lapis lazuli stone. This continued the age-old idea of matriarchal religiosity that the vulva of the goddess has life-giving power, can heal and bring about renewal. Thus, under pressure from increasing patriarchalization, the official cult of this Great Goddess became a popular religion in which the beneficial power of the goddess and her priestesses remained in the everyday lives of people. The ruling male gods were not regarded as benevolent, and so the popularity of the goddess increased. It was a long time before these and other goddesses could be finally dethroned.[103]

The rulers of the later military empires had to take this situation into account, despite their repeated attempts at self-deification. Thus, the goddess Ishtar possessed large temples both in the Akkadian empire and in the Babylonian empire, and was one of the main deities. But she had to put up with being reduced, on the one hand to the goddess of love, and on the other she had to function as a goddess of war, although these two functions are mutually exclusive. Her art of war, however, did not seem to be much in demand seeing as in the later Assyrian empire, the god Assur ruled over war and went before the army in every battle.

The rulers, however, did not believe these methods of reducing goddesses and distorting their original character, downgrading them as wives and humiliating them as daughters of male gods, were enough to dissuade the people from worshiping them. The goddess also had to be killed, as can be seen from the example of the Babylonian Marduk. According to mythology, he became the supreme god of Babylon by killing the goddess Tiamat, who embodied the primordial sea. He then created heaven and earth from her two parts.[104]—This makes it abundantly evident how the originally female, creative power is usurped by male gods, for Tiamat gave birth to the universe from her formless body and created heaven and earth herself. She was the source of all being and all life, the female ←350 | 351→primordial womb and the primordial fluid. In repeated cycles she devoured the universe to then re-create it. She possessed the sacred “Tablets of Destiny,” which symbolized power over the universe.[105] But now the male god appeared as creator, and in order to be credible, he had to denounce Tiamat as “chaos,” from which he himself created order, that is, the new patriarchal order. Since Tiamat was also Marduk’s divine mother, this is the first matricide, something that would be repeated later in both the divine and human spheres.[106] This gruesome fact and the intimidating patriarchal ideology were publicly celebrated during the Babylonian New Year Festival, at which Marduk’s struggle against “chaos,” in other words, against the matriarchal world, was annually dramatized.[107]

Nevertheless, the rulers did not succeed in abolishing the goddess, and it would take thousands of years until this goal was achieved. The seed of this change can be found in the monotheism of the Israelite tribes, strictly patriarchal herder nomads who invaded the land of Canaan from the desert and settled there.

In the Land of Canaan: Trading Cities, “democracy,” and the One-God Religion

The history of the Bronze Age cities in the Levant (Palestine, Lebanon and Syria) was different to that of Mesopotamia. Although they, too, were located in a hot climate, they were never dependent on artificial irrigation and therefore did not develop any state bureaucracy. Their economy managed to survive with the rains in the Mediterranean region, which were sparse in summer but abundant in winter. They remained independent trading cities; there was no need for them to form larger states.

Without the large areas of land that existed in the artificially irrigated, wide plains of Mesopotamia, they continued to live off horticulture and small-scale farming. Their advantage, however, was their specialization in the cultivation of plants. Because these cities had appeared thousands of years before the emergence of the great river civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, they could benefit from traditional knowledge and a long development dating back to the beginning ←351 | 352→ of the Neolithic period in West Asia. The women cultivated olive groves, vineyards, date palms and fig trees here, and produced fragrances and perfumes. From

Mount Lebanon the men brought cedar wood, and from the shores of Asia Minor came special mineral resources such as salt, copper and tin—all goods that did not exist in the alluvial plains of the great rivers.[108] The location of the cities was also extremely favorable for trade, so they were able to build up an extensive network with their coveted goods. They traveled the overland trade routes with caravans, to the east as far as Mesopotamia and to the south as far as Egypt. In this way Byblos in Lebanon and Ugarit in Syria became the richest trading cities on the Levantine coast. For the caravan trade route to Mesopotamia they founded the important cities of Ebla and Mari, so that merchants could travel across the Syrian Desert.

In the Bronze Age, this area was called “the Land of Canaan” and was paradisiacal in its own way. The Canaanites, who possessed an ancient Semitic language, had immigrated here, mixing with the local population of the cities and largely adopting their culture. In general, they engaged in peaceful trade and cultural interchange, but there was also armed rivalry between cities and, as a result, loose and changing alliances. They also cooperated with the wandering tribes of herder nomads, whose territories the caravans crossed, through trade and by recruiting young men as caravan leaders or mercenaries.[109] Nevertheless, they were always subject to the whims of the military empires that formed in the river civilizations on the Euphrates and Tigris or Nile, paying tributes to one or another of these Great Powers.[110]

The Canaanites were skilled in a range of arts and excellent crafts people, so their metalworking and textile products were also in great demand. Textile industry was in the hands of the women, who ran it in the temple workshops; here they invented the technique of purple dyeing and made garments which were so beautiful they prevailed as the clothing of kings in many cultures.[111] Centuries later, when these cities had converted to maritime trade in the Mediterranean, the Canaanites became, because of this, famous as “Phoenicians” (Greek: “Phoenicia” means “land of red purple”). However, they always described themselves as “Canaanites,” even when they had founded the rich, magnificent ←352 | 353→city of

Carthage in North Africa, which confronted the Greeks and Romans as a competitor for naval power in the Mediterranean.[112]

The social order of these trading cities was similar to that of the early city states of Sumer, in that it was relatively egalitarian, and a hierarchical state bureaucracy never developed here. The kings played only a minor role; they were elected temporarily to handle skirmishes between the cities and then dismissed again. The city was ruled by the council of elders, and it was a joint decision whether the city should embark on a diplomatic mission or war. Often the city council was against war and could depose the king in the case of disagreement.[113] Craftsmen were held in high esteem, and merchants enjoyed the highest reputation, to whom the cities owed their wealth. The status of women was also high. With regard to their own crafts, that is, textiles, they enjoyed the same prestige as men and received the same wages.[114] Occasionally they even took part in trade between cities,[115] but not in caravans or overseas, as such long, dangerous journeys remained the business of men. Most of the land was in the hands of wealthy women. They looked after the specialized horticulture, produced wine and olive oil, the most important trade goods, and managed the estates themselves, in accordance with the ancient, matriarchal tradition of this region.

However, the kinship order in the land of Canaan was patrilineal, although it must have been matrilineal before the immigration of the Canaanites, who brought the father-line with them. Women did not sit on the city council, but they did perform certain public political functions as priestesses and queens. The earlier matrilineal order is evident in the high-ranking offices of the queen and queen mother. The queen was not simply the wife of the king, but was elected to represent the women, whereas the king was only elected in relation to her. They were neither married nor related; the queen had her own estates and her own residence and communicated with other city heads independently of the king. When the queen died, the king lost his position; as such, the queenship was considered more important than the king. The most highly regarded person was the queen mother, as the mother of the king. She could propose one of her sons as the new king, and after the city council had approved her election, she formally appointed ←353 | 354→him king and held an official position with him. She alone owned and controlled the royal estates.[116]

The first thing that stands out is that the king is dependent on both the queen mother and the queen; secondly, that it is the king’s mother who holds the highest office, not his father, as it should be with the father-line. This was due to an earlier matriarchal pattern, according to which it was the mother of the queen who held the highest office, not the king’s mother. A man could only become king if he married the daughter of the queen mother. In other words, the throne used to be inherited along the mother-line.

The queen and king played an important role in religious ceremonies, acting as priestess and priest. The cities of Canaan had temples devoted to important goddesses, such as the mother goddess Asherah with her partner El, and the younger goddess Anat with her consort Ba’al. Asherah was originally regarded as an independent “creatrix of the gods” and was worshipped as the Mother Earth in stones, trees and caves. El was later raised above her as a father god, but then dethroned by the younger Ba’al. Anat was a sky goddess as the “Lady of the Mountain” and was even worshipped much later as the “Queen of Heaven.” In her mythology, as the goddess of love, she joined together with her partner Ba’al, an atmosphere hero, in the Sacred Marriage to bring the desired rain to the country. In this ceremony, the queen or a high priestess embodied the goddess and the king embodied the hero, as representative of the people of his city.[117] These religious patterns are late matriarchal and existed not only in the cities of the Levant, but also in the thea-cracy of the early Sumerian cities. In contrast to the increasing patriarchalizing of the Mesopotamian empires, the matriarchal roots in the land of Canaan can therefore still be recognized.

However, the history in the Levant region then took a special turn. Initially, an oligarchy developed here made up of merchants, in other words, the wealthy. They replaced the council of elders and determined the development of the city themselves. Finally, the kingship was abolished too, and with it the queens, the representatives of the women. Instead, the citizens in each city established a republican constitutional system made up of the political organs of the oligarchic city council and a general assembly of the citizens. Such a system might appear democratic, but it wasn't, because women did not appear in this constitution, and not either at the citizen assembly; they no longer played a political role. Their importance declined, and they were restricted to administering the estates ←354 | 355→and the goddess religion, while the immense wealth that was increasingly gained from maritime trade remained in the hands of men.[118] —This shows that a so-called "democracy" can also bring about patriarchalization. For this was a purely male democracy, such as the democracies that emerged in later epochs in Greece, Rome and the bourgeois Europe.

The second watershed occurred with the Israelites invading the land of Canaan. They were also Semitic herder nomads, and they came in several waves from the southern deserts (mid-2nd millennium). Just as aggressive as the Akkadians in Sumer, they settled in the southern part of Canaan (Old Palestine). Previously they had long resided in Egypt, where they had been oppressed, but were led away by Moses, their "charismatic leader," to reach the more northerly "Promised Land." From Egypt Moses brought with him the monotheistic form of religion which he had taken from the one-god sun-god religion of the Egyptian pharaoh, Akhenaten. By the exclusive worship of a single god, Yahweh, Moses succeeded in uniting the Israelite tribes through religion and leading them to the fertile land of Canaan.

In their new home, the Israelite prophets constantly intensified this monotheistic religion in favor of Yahweh, and attempted to impose this on the whole population. The Israelite people were not completely convinced about monotheism, which served as a means to suppress other religions and ways of life and to preach a new attitude of intolerance. But the centralism of this form of religion meant a welcome instrument of domination for its prophets because, like all monotheisms, it was based on a single Holy Book, which supposedly came from the one and only male god and which only the prophets were able to interpret. Such a religion leaves a lot of room for power.

However, the people, that is, the ordinary Israelites, adopted some matriarchal elements from the Canaanite culture they now lived in. The Israelite women in particular, who were extremely oppressed and had no rights, were deeply devoted to the goddess Ashera and the cult of Anat and Ba’al.[119] Zealous of their one and only god, the prophets saw the women’s behavior as “harlotry,” and they waged a long and bitter fight against them. They condemned the women’s devotion to the goddess so much that, eventually, the image of the “woman as whore” and “gateway to sin” became a fixed idea. Only centuries later, in Assyrian times, did the ←355 | 356→Yahweh monotheism of the prophets prevail among the Israelite people, resulting in women being generally excluded from the religious community. This was now purely male, combined with an ever-increasing hostility towards women.[120]

Although this radical abolition of the goddess was, at that time, still limited to the small people of Israelites, it became worldwide with the spread of monotheistic Christianity and, later, Islam. –

Finally, we should summarize the results of this chapter.

- In Mesopotamia, too, *climatic changes* played a decisive role in the formation of patriarchal structures. As a result of the climate becoming colder and drier, more favorable conditions were initially created in the plains of North and South Mesopotamia, with the swamps disappearing and the land becoming habitable. Over the millennia, however, the situation changed as the climate became increasingly dry, leading to increasing shortages of water.
- At the economic level: Initially, the matriarchal cultures in North Mesopotamia lived on rain-fed agriculture until the *invention of artificial irrigation*, which happened as they advanced south, but did not change the traditional social order. However, the ever-increasing waves of immigration of peoples from the growing steppes and deserts throughout the vast region, which led to *growing population pressure* in South

Mesopotamia, made it necessary to *establish the centralization* of the irrigation system and to ration the water supply. This enormous density of population led to very large cities, which became too large to provide for themselves towards the end. The additional salinization of the soil made these cities *doubly dependent*; on the one hand, on ecology, and on the other, on foreign rulers who subjugated them.

- At the political and social level: The organization of the centralized irrigation system required a *hierarchy of maintenance and administration,* and thus the *city state* was created. Initially, this hierarchy of officials with a top administrator, later a king, was still responsible to the city council and clan houses (Sumer): the *late matriarchal situation.* With increasing centralization, however, decisions in the administrative hierarchy were made independently of the citizens. The kings of rival city states conquered other urban areas, warfare became notorious, territorial *regional states* emerged: *patriarchal development.* At last, *military empires* were formed ←356 | 357→(Akkad, Babylon, Assyria), which were extremely centralized around a single ruler: *classic patriarchy.* Society was now strictly stratified into classes. *The status of women diminished* steadily, and they were now generally defined by their sexuality and dependent on male control in all classes, albeit in different ways.
- At the level of world view and religion: The city states initially represented a matriarchal *thea-cracy* with the *city goddess* as the embodiment of the land and the mother of the people. The partner of the goddess was the *Holy King* as her servant, who was responsible for the welfare of the people. In the Early Dynastic period, the kings, who descended from North Mesopotamian patriarchal herder warrior peoples, *profaned royalty*, resulting in the *self-deification* of the sole ruler of a military empire.
- This implied a break with the matriarchal religion, and the *goddesses were subordinated to male gods.* The official debasement of goddesses was undermined by their growing worship among the ordinary people. As a result, the more the status of women declined and people became

impoverished, the more the *worship of goddesses as a popular religion* spread. Only later, the intolerance of the newly emerging *monotheism* led to the *abolition of the goddesses.*

Definition

Patriarchy is defined as a *society based on dominance*, which at first means *dominance over women* as the source of life and the next generations. Additionally, it means *dominance over the majority of men, over foreign peoples, and over nature in general*. All these have no value per se, and are merely seen as exploitable resources to strengthen the power of the rulers. *Classical patriarchy forms states,* as local territorial states or as great empires, up to "world empires."

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1 The main sites are Tell Hassuna, Tell es-Sawwan, Tell Halaf. See for these cultures Seton Lloyd: *The Archaeology of Mesopotamia*, London 1978, Thames and Hudson, 80–107.

2 Lloyd, 86; Parzinger: *Die Kinder des Prometheus*, 158; Hans J. Nissen: *The early history of the ancient Near East, 9000–2000 B.C.*, Chicago 1988, University of Chicago Press; Hans J. Nissen: *Geschichte Alt-Vorderasiens* (new edition in German), Munich 2012 (2.), Oldenbourg, 33–34 (the page-numbers refer to this latest edition).

3 Lloyd, 88–89, 104; Parzinger: Op. cit., 158, 160.

4 Charles Keith Maisels: *Early Civilizations of the Old World. The Formative Histories of Egypt, The Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China*, London-New York 1999, Routledge, 141.

5 Lloyd, 89, 105 and Fig. 46.

6 Maisels, 141–143, 146. No evidence has been found of a social hierarchy in Halaf, which even the stamp seals and counting tokens cannot prove. Their function was very different, see below.

7 Op. cit., 124, 147; Lloyd, 89, 91; Nissen, 35.

8 Near Choga Mami, see Maisels, 150.

9 Op. cit., 85–86, 125, 132, 135, 150.

10 Nissen, 34–36. These assertions are made in self-contradiction to the archaeological facts mentioned by the author.

11 5000 years ago the shoreline of the Persian Gulf extended 160 km further inland than today. See Chris Scarre: *Past Worlds. The Times Atlas of Archaeology,* 124–125.

12 Maisels, 152; the main site is Tell el-Obed or Ubaid.

13 Op. cit., 152–156; Nissen, 36–38.

14 Maisels, 153, 156.

15 Op. cit., 156.

16 Op. cit., 152.

17 Nissen, 42, 46.

18 Op. cit., 46, 67, 194.
19 Maisels, 175.
20 Nissen, 39.
21 Op. cit., 38–39.
22 Op. cit., 39–40.
23 This problematic definition comes from Gordon Childe. For the term “city” he proposed the criteria of size, specialized professions (craftsmen, merchants, office holders, priests, artists), large public buildings, technical skills, writing and counting systems, development of sciences (astronomy, calendar, geometry, mathematics), and long-distance trade. Neolithic cities possessed all this very early on. Childe also stated the following criteria: concentration of surplus (for what purpose?), ruling class, hierarchy, and permanent state organization. The latter characterize patriarchally led city states; this indicates that he derived his criteria from the late Mesopotamia and generalized this one-sided definition unacceptably. In this respect, the “Urban Revolution,” as he called it, originated not only here, but much earlier with the Neolithic, matriarchal city cultures (see Chapters 3 and 4 of the book in hand). See Childe’s definition in Maisels, 179–185. See also the critique of Megan Gannon: “Megasites of Ukraine,” in: *Archaeology Magazine*, May/June 2020.
24 Nissen, 190–193.
25 Op. cit., 45; Maisels, 175.
26 Maisels, 87.
27 Nissen, 44–45, 47, 54–55.
28 See the Congress “25th International Meeting of Ancient Near Eastern Scientists,” Berlin 1978.
29 Nissen, 57.
30 Op. cit., 70–71.
31 Op. cit., 57, 70.
32 Such a trading post was, for example, Habuba Kabira, see Op. cit. 51–52.
33 Ibid.
34 Op. cit., 74. Lloyd, 175.
35 Archaeologists inferred this league from the similarity of the city seals; the following cities were involved: Ur, Larsa, Nippur, Uruk, Zabala and others. See T. Jacobsen: “Early Political Development in Mesopotamia,” in: *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie, Neue Folge* 18/52, 1957, 91–140; R. J. Matthews: “Jemdet Nasr: The Site and the Period,” in: *Biblical Archaeologist*, December 1992, 199; R. J. Matthews: *Cities, Seals and Writing: Archaic Seal Impressions from Jemdet Nasr and Ur.* Series: *Materialien zu den Frühen Schriftzeugnissen des Vorderen Orients*, Vol. 2, Berlin 1993, Gebr. Mann Verlag.
36 Nissen, 63, 74, 193–195. Lloyd, 175.
37 These differences were deduced from the different kinship terms.
38 Kish (Kiš) was the first dynastic capital in Sumer. See Lloyd, 131.
39 Nissen, 68.—One example is the conflict between Girsu and Umma, documented by a victory column. Girsu/Lagash was an old center, feeling pressed by the newly grown Umma.
40 The late Uruk was thus larger than Jerusalem at the time of Herod with 120 ha, as Athens and Piraeus together at the time of Themistocles with 210 ha and as Rome at the time of Emperor Augustus with 360 ha.
41 Nissen, 63–64.
42 See also the critique of James C. Scott: *Against the Grain. A Deep History of the Earliest States*, New Haven-London 2017, Yale University Press. Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen:

“Die Befriedung der Welt braucht die Bäuerin,” in *Die weiblichen Wurzeln des Bio-Anbaus*, eds. Diane Bach und Werner Scheidegger, Meilen 2020, Bioforum Schweiz, 101–108.

43 Nissen, 73.

44 Ibid.

45 Op. cit., 80; Lloyd, 176–177.

46 Nissen, 81.

47 Op. cit., 80–82.

48 Op. cit., 82–86; Lloyd, 177.

49 Nissen, 87–88.

50 Op. cit., 88–89.

51 Op. cit., 89, 93.

52 Op. cit., 90, 94–95.

53 The Indo-European Hittites are regarded as the inventors of iron weapons (around 1,400), which they monopolized but not for very long.

54 Op. cit., 114.

55 Ibid., see also the illustrations on Assyrian reliefs with these scenes in Lloyd, 262, 271.

56 Nissen, 114.

57 Horses were not known in Mesopotamia, and when the first horses were imported from the north, they were considered exotic animals. Anthony: *The Horse, the Wheel and Language*, 412–418.

58 Nissen, 122–125.

59 Op. cit., 122, 128. 130.

60 Op. cit., 130, 140.—I follow here the reasoning of Nissen, which is very plausible for the collapse of such a system.

61 It is therefore mistaken to immediately assume the father-line and father right here; there are no logical reasons for this. The Mosuo (China) and the Minangkabau (Indonesia) are examples of maintaining the mother-line under stress conditions (see Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies*, Chapters 5 and 8).

62 This typical division of labor is common in China, Indonesia and India.

63 The term “property” in our sense is problematic here, even if it is used frequently and misleadingly. Neither did the peasants have land as “private property,” nor was “temple property” exclusive, but temple land was regarded as common land.

64 Tivka Frymer-Kensky: *In the Wake of the Goddess: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*, New York 1992, Fawcett Columbine, 34.

65 Nissen, 69; Maisels, 173.

66 Miriam Robbins Dexter: *Whence the Goddess: A Source Book*, New York-London 1990, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 16, 21; Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, 93. Reprint on: www.goettner-abendroth.de/EN. Also the name of the temple district of Uruk: “Eanna,” referred to the name of the goddess Inanna.

67 Maisels, 174.

68 Lloyd, 111. See the Sacred Marriage in general in Edwin O. James: *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*, New York 1958, Praeger, Chapter IV, on Mesopotamia 113–117; Edwin O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess;* Robert Graves: *The Greek Myths;* Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros;* Gerda Lerner: *The Creation of Patriarchy*, New York 1986, Oxford University Press, 164–165.

69 See the royalty in Mesopotamia in J. N. Postgate: *Early Mesopotamia*, London-New York 1992, Chapter 14, 265; sacred royalty in general in James George Frazer: *The Golden*

Bough, 9 vols., New York, NY, 1990, Saint Martin's Press (3rd edition, first edition London 1890); James: *Myth and Ritual*, Chapter III; Graves: *The Greek Myths;* Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros.*

70 For example, "Lugal-Banda" of Uruk, "Lugal-Zagesi" of Umma, the last Sumerian king; see Lloyd, 110–112; Maisels, 171.

71 Maisels, 166.

72 Op. cit., 170.

73 This political form is documented by texts from the city Girsu/Tello; no evidence has been found for other cities or for earlier times (Nissen, 69). Nevertheless, a number of researchers have generalized this for the early period of Sumer, since it has also been seen in other cultures of that epoch. In addition, the mythological patterns support this premise when analyzed in comparative terms for the contiguous cultural area of West Asia, Mediterranean countries and Europe. See James: *The Cult of the Mother Goddess;* James: *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East;* Graves: *The Greek Myths;* Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros.*

74 Samuel Noah Kramer: *History begins at Sumer,* Philadelphia 1988, University of Pennsylvania Press.

75 On this see the study of Susan Pollock and Reinhard Bernbeck: "And They Said, Let Us Make Gods in Our Image. Gendered Ideologies in Ancient Mesopotamia," in: *Reading the Body. Representations and Remains in the Archaeological Record,* ed. Alison E. Rautman, Philadelphia 2000, University of Pennsylvania Press, 150–164.

76 These deities are listed in Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer: *Inanna. Queen of Heaven and Earth*, New York 1983, Harper&Row, 10–11. See also the re-narrative of the Inanna myths with cultural-historical commentary by Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Inanna, Gilgamesch, Isis, Rhea. Die großen Göttinnenmythen Sumers, Ägypten und Griechenlands,* Koenigstein 2004, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 9–45.

77 The same patterns of transformation, that is, the parallelization of goddesses with gods; goddesses made into wives and daughters of predominant gods; the masculinization of goddesses; the institutionalization of religion with the emergence of a caste of priests of its own, can be found in the patriarchalization of all cultures of West Asia, the Mediterranean region and Europe; for the rules of such transformations see Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros.*

78 Wolkstein and Kramer, 29–36.

79 Op. cit., 29–89.

80 Ibid.

81 *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian,* transl. and ed. by Andrew R. George, London 2003 (reprinted, at first 1999), Penguin Books. See also the re-narrative of the Gilgamesh epic with cultural-historical commentary by Goettner-Abendroth in: *Inanna*, 47–90.

82 Gilgamesh was the 3rd king of the 1st Dynasty of Uruk (Early Dynastic Period I); see Maisels, 170.

83 *The Epic of Gilgamesh.*

84 Maisels, 174.

85 Paul Koschaker: *Rechtsvergleichende Studien zur Gesetzgebung Hammurabis, König von Babylon,* Leipzig 1917, 150 f.; Gerda Lerner: *The Creation of Patriarchy,* 145–146. Gerda Lerner gives an excellent study on the situation of women under patriarchal conditions in Babylon and Assyria, when these conditions were already established. Her assertion of patriarchy already in the early agricultural societies, however, is unproven and untenable.

Her book therefore does not describe the “creation of patriarchy,” as the title promises, but shows the women’s situation in the already patriarchalized societies of Mesopotamia.

86 Lerner, 121–125.

87 Op. cit., 142–159.

88 Nissen, 210.

89 Lerner, 106–119.

90 This applies today to women from East Europe and Africa, for example, who are sold into the sex industry of Western countries and have no rights.

91 This shows that the compulsion for women to veil themselves is considerably older than Islam, although it has been continued by Islamic societies to this day.

92 Lerner, 173–179.

93 Op. cit., 174–176.

94 This has been elaborated excellently by Gerda Lerner: Op. cit., 180–181.

95 One of the advantages was that, after the death of the daughter, the dowry was paid back to the family by the temple; see Op. cit., 147, 166.

96 The idea of “temple prostitution” was brought up by the ancient Greeks. Even then it was a misunderstanding, but to this day it remains a stubborn prejudice.

97 Lerner, 163–166, 168, 172.

98 Maisels, 174.

99 Lerner, 98–100. Lerner coined the terms of upper-class women as “representatives” and “pledges” of men.

100 Nissen, 70.

101 See Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, Part I.

102 See this Inanna myth in: Wolkstein and Kramer, 12–19; Goettner-Abendroth: *Inanna*, 14–16. –These “me” that Enki gave to Inanna were, for example: her status as Great Goddess of Sumer; her status as high priestess of Sumer; the crown and the throne over all the land; knowledge of the truth through the art of love and the celebration of the Sacred Marriage; also Inanna’s descent into the Underworld and her return from there; power over fate, the stars and the hearts of humans; sovereignty over all the temples of Sumer.

103 Lerner, 182–184.

104 See the *Enūma Eliš*, the Babylonian creation epic, which is a late version of an earlier creation myth. Cited in James: *Myth and Ritual*, 154–156; original text in: *Babylonian Creation Myths*, Wilfred G. Lambert (ed.): Pennsylvania 2013, Eisenbrauns.

105 See Barbara Walker: *The Women’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, San Francisco 1983, Harper&Row, 998–999, and the sources cited there.

106 Examples of matricide in the divine sphere are the god Jehovah, who slays “chaos” Rahab, the primordial sea; the demigod Perseus, who beheads the “gruesome” Gorgon Medusa and kills a “sea monster”; the demigod Bellerophon, who kills the “monster” Chimaera–these are always demonized primordial goddesses and thus primordial mothers. A well-known example in the human sphere is Orestes’ murder of his mother, Clytemnestra. See Graves, 216, 220–221.

107 James: *Myth and Ritual*, 223.

108 I. M. Diakanoff: *Early Antiquity*, Chicago 1991, University of Chicago Press, 145.

109 Giovanni Pettinato: *Ebla: A New Look at History*, Baltimore, MD 1991, John Hopkins University Press, 84–86.

110 Diakanoff: *Early Antiquity*, 287–289.

111 Ronald M. Glassman: *The Origins of Democracy in Tribes, City-States and Nation-States*, Cham, Switzerland 2017, Springer International Publishing, Vol. I, 545.

112 Ibid.

113 Henri Frankfort: *Kingships and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*, Chicago 1978, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

114 Glassman, 468–469; based on the study of Pettinato: *Ebla*.

115 This is proved by documents from Ebla.

116 Glassman, 468–469; Pettinato, 77–80.

117 See Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, Chapter 5.6.

118 John D. Grainger: *Hellenistic Phoenicia*, Oxford 1991, Clarendon Press.

119 Gerda Weiler: *Das Matriarchat im Alten Israel*, Stuttgart 1989, Kohlhammer Verlag, in its entirety, especially 71–74. Elements of feminine divinity can still be found in the Hebrew Kabbalah, the mystical book of the Israelites.

120 Lerner, 223–225.

7

Bronze Age and Iron Age in South Europe: Late Matriarchal Societies and Increasing Patriarchalization

Developments in the Eurasian Steppes and in the urban areas of Mesopotamia led to the rise of patriarchal patterns in West Asia in two different ways. These were later exported to Europe and ended the matriarchal epoch there. The increasing patriarchalization of Europe, however, did not result in a uniform societal type. Different late matriarchal cultures and elements persisted for a long time and generated a variety of phenomena in the Bronze Age there.

The Waves of Patriarchalization from the Steppes

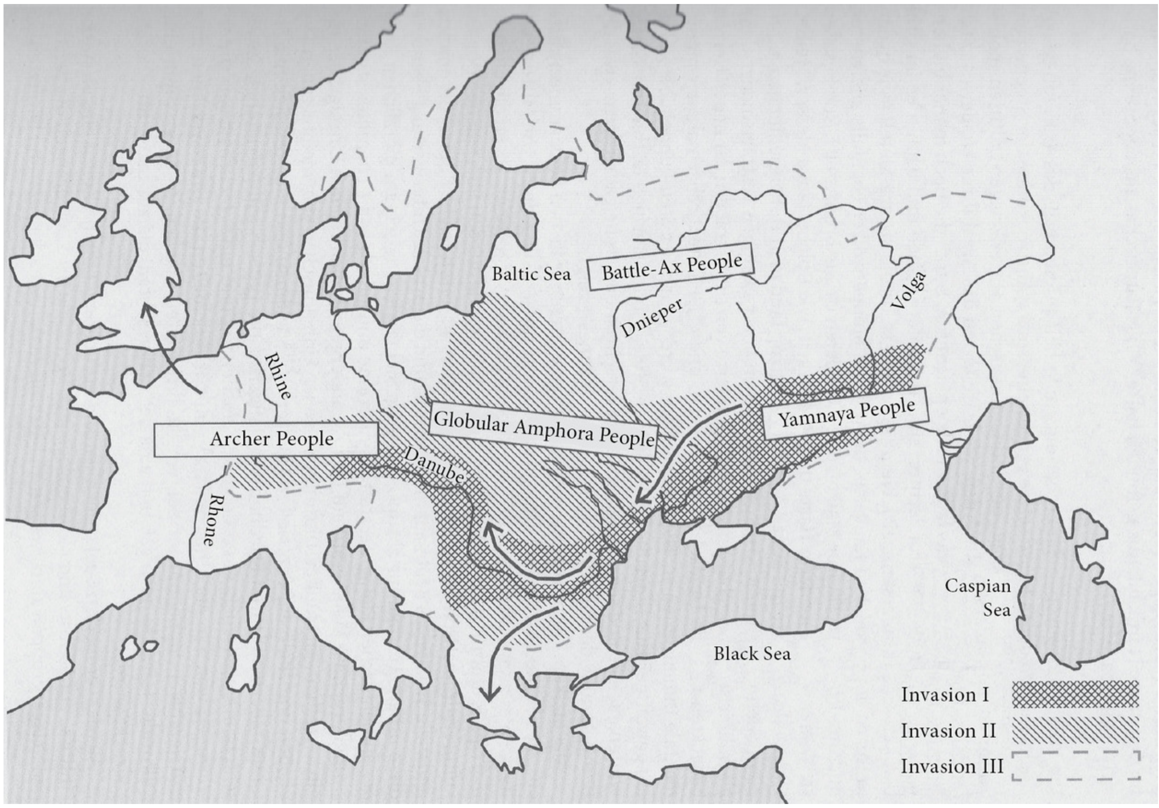
Chronology

Mid-5th millennium (4,400/4,300 BCE):	First Indo-European wave of conquest
Mid-4th millennium (from 3,500 BCE):	Second Indo-European wave of conquest
Early 3rd millennium (from 3,000 BCE):	Third Indo-European wave of conquest
Late 3rd millennium (2,500/2,100 BCE):	Effects throughout Europe

Limited Destruction, Far-Reaching Consequences and Constantly Improved Weapons

We have already described the increasing desiccation of the Eurasian Steppes from the 6th millennium onwards and have highlighted its consequences. From the middle of the 5th millennium, still in the Neolithic epoch, the aggressive mounted warriors from the Volga region spread their way of life over the entire steppe area. Some founded an early conquering culture on the lower reaches of the Dnieper and Dniester (“Early Yamnaya,” 4,400–3,400).[1] This happened close to the delta of the river Danube and its tributaries, and thus they soon invaded that area as well. The lush floodplains were too tempting for grazing their cattle, as well as the treasures of the flourishing Neolithic cultures of Karanovo-Gumelniţa and Varna in the entire lower Danube basin (eastern Romania and Bulgaria). While the Cucuteni-Tripolje culture in the Ukraine and on the eastern border of the Carpathians managed to protect itself from the invaders in their region, and lived in coexistence for 800 years, the farming villages of Karanovo on the Danube were defenseless and at the mercy of the attackers. Although the first Indo-Europeans came only in small groups of mounted warriors, the Karanovo people fled westward to escape their brutal violence. The rich Varna culture on the Black Sea coast was completely destroyed and replaced by the Indo-European culture of Cernawodă.

Dwellings located on open land, with the longhouses of the matriarchal clans, now disappeared. They were replaced by strategically protected, fortified hilltop settlements on steep slopes and ledges on the riverbank, consisting only of a few small houses in a narrow strip: these were the first military strongholds in which the assailants could entrench themselves. From here they continued to penetrate Southwest Romania, coming up against other cultural groups who fled their violence and sought refuge on the Danube’s islands and in caves in the Carpathians (Transylvania), where they could continue their culture, hidden in the mountains, for another four to five hundred years. The people from the populous Vinča culture were also able to escape northwards, settling in the middle Danube basin (Hungary) (Map 9).[2] This shows that the first advance by mounted warriors from the steppes remained a localized patriarchal period within Europe as a whole, which was matriarchal at the time.


Baltic Sea
Battle-Ax People
Dnieper
Volga
Rhine
Archer People
Globular Amphora People
Yamnaya People
Danube
Rhone
Caspian Sea
Black Sea
Invasion I
Invasion II
Invasion III

Map 9: The three waves of invasions of the Indo-Europeans, from about 4,400 to 3,000 BCE (Drawing after Marija Gimbutas)

←360 | 361→ ←361 | 362→

Nevertheless, the destruction of the cultures of Varna, Karanovo and Vinča and their inhabitants' flight caused great unrest and a chain reaction of displaced peoples. Some of the Vinča people migrated on to Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia and as far as the eastern Alps, settling in previously uninhabited areas and establishing their villages on the highest points in the mountainous area or surrounded by watercourses. They even occupied caves that were difficult to access, reflecting the plight of these people and their concern for safety in the face of the new, warlike conditions. The women and men of the Lengyel culture in Hungary, successors to the early Linear-band Pottery culture, also left their ancestral home and moved along the upper course of the Danube to Austria, South Germany and South Poland. At the end of the 5th millennium, the Vinča culture with its temples, goddess sculptures and elaborate pottery was extinct in its former homeland, as well as the Lengyel culture, which no longer existed in Hungary, but had shifted north. On the whole, this reflects a social disaster of an extent previously unknown in Europe.[3]

The preceding advanced, splendid cultures were now replaced by a society of patriarchal cattle breeders who kept herds of cattle and horses and had no knowledge of agriculture. Their pottery was coarse and grey and remained primitive, tools were made of antlers and bone similar to those found in the steppe regions. Kurgans were built as hill graves, but only for male dead, the warrior chieftains, who were buried there together with their weapons.[4] If a woman was buried with a man, she was the sacrificed widow of her master, placed beside him with almost no offerings. Horse sacrifices have also been found in the graves, and the carved “horse-head scepter” reappeared as a symbol of power, similar to the ones found in the Volga and the North Caucasus regions.[5] Steppe patriarchy had established itself in Europe!

The second Indo-European wave of invasions took place in the middle of the 4th millennium (from 3,500). After a milder phase, the steppes began to dry out again, turning the people of the Indo-European herder warrior cultures into mobile semi-nomads with wagons. They considerably expanded the area for grazing their herds, and robbery became epidemic. They got to know copper through the still flourishing Cucuteni-Tripolje culture and were soon mining it themselves in the Urals (Copper Stone Age). Shortly afterwards, bronze metallurgy emerged in the cultures of the northern Caucasus, which the steppe peoples also appropriated, founding here their conquest culture Maikop (Early Bronze Age). They now had weapons that were particularly hard and durable, such as daggers, long knives, chisels, flat axes and axes with shafts.[6] In Maikop, too, hilltop settlements with sunken apse houses have been found, surrounded by massive fortified walls which served as military strongholds. Hundreds of hill graves for the new masters now covered the landscape like a pox, and the chieftains' tombs took on monumental dimensions: a stone dome vaulted the burial chamber, and a huge mound was piled on top, held in place by stelae and stone rings. Entire arsenals of weapons and even types of wagons were placed inside as grave goods, indicating an overemphasis on the individual, the "Big Man."

The Maikop culture spread all along the northern Black Sea coast, reaching as far as the rivers Don, Dnieper and Dniester and the Crimea.[7] Around the middle of the 4th millennium, they pushed forward from the northern Black Sea region against the Cucuteni-Tripolje culture, whose cities had dramatically increased due to a large number of refugees from the invaded Danube cultures. Here, rich copper deposits and many treasures awaited the conquerors as booty, and the brutal subjugation put an abrupt end to this high urban culture. Archaeological evidence is provided by the sudden disappearance of local elements; instead, the characteristic Maikop-style fortresses and exceptionally rich individual graves for the ruling men now appeared. The subjugated Mediterranean-type natives remained lower down, on the extensive river terraces, and had to content themselves with poor graves in their cemeteries.[8] Now the typical early patriarchal two-class society had emerged here, too, consisting of a few dominating individuals with a majority of subjects. The subjugated people kept their matriarchal clan patterns as well as their old beliefs, so there was now one culture of the dominant class and another of the dominated class, which was relegated to a sub-culture.

Strong influences spread from the conquered lands of the former Cucuteni-Tripolje culture to Southeast and Central Europe; from 3,400 to 3,200, groups of mounted warriors advanced into the lower Danube basin for a second time and occupied it. They transformed the old, abandoned "tells," the former residential hills of the previous cultures, into their chieftain seats and surrounded them with mighty stone walls (in Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia).[9] Other groups of mounted warriors did not settle down, but roamed farther north into the middle Danube basin and surrounding areas (Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia), finally reaching ←363 | 364→the countries around the upper course of the Danube (Austria, South Germany, Bohemia).[10] Evidence of their destructive raids has been found as far as South Poland, with settlements destroyed by fire, resulting in a sharp decline in the local population. North of this, however, a traditional, matriarchal culture survived until the end of this millennium (Funnel-Necked Beaker Culture, TRB).[11]

Wherever the Indo-European conquerors settled, their architecture of rule and a lot of bronze weaponry have been found. The surviving women and men of subjugated peoples now cultivated the fields for them, while their masters concentrated on grazing their herds. Their strongholds were now considered as the political and cultural centers, and also contained metal workshops, as the rulers had their own skilled armorers. The local craftswomen had to produce their artistic pottery for the foreign chieftains; these were now only found in the strongholds and the tombs of the rulers.[12] At once, the artifacts of the female potters were profaned: instead of being used as sacred vessels for temple ceremonies, they were now used by men as drinking vessels. The ruler and his warriors used them for their ritual drinking bouts. The gruesome custom of human sacrifice formed part of the chieftains’ burials. There were often double burials of the ruler together with his widow and beloved cattle (Fig. 1), but this was not enough: sometimes even the whole family was sacrificed. Thus, tombs with a male skeleton in the middle have been found, surrounded by women and children, the fact that there were several killed women indicating polygamy (see Fig. 5 and 6 of Chapter 5).

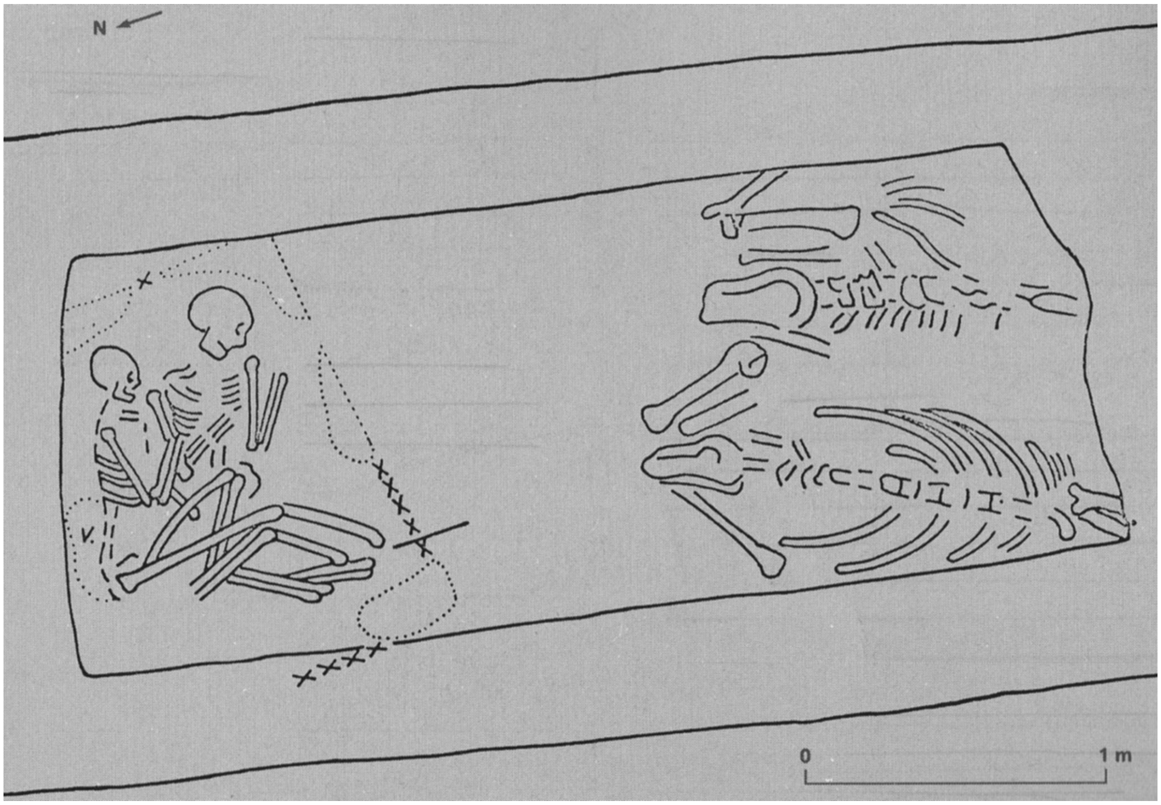


Fig. 1: Burial of a man with his widow and his team of oxen (Hungary)

During the last few centuries of the 4th millennium, this second Indo-European invasion, labeled the “Globular Amphora culture,” so called because of the spherical shape of their vessels, spread as far as Central Europe, taking over South Germany and all of Poland (see Map 9). This led to the downfall of the matriarchal TRB culture in Poland, whose megalithic passage graves under long hills, built for the community, now disappeared, making way for chieftains’ kurgans similar to those of the Maikop culture. Again, archaeologists have found remnants of human sacrifices consisting exclusively of women, children, and young adults, accompanied by animal sacrifices of horses, cattle, and dogs.[13] The old matriarchal symbolism disappeared from artifacts everywhere, replaced by horse sculptures, while the ceramics have sun and star motifs in many different shapes.[14] This is because, in the vastness of the steppes, nomads would use the sun ←364 | 365→and stars as their guides, and the first gods of the sky appeared early on in their belief systems. However, sun worship is not especially Indo-European; it existed before, but in the form of matriarchal sun goddesses.

The Indo-Europeanization of Europe and the Glaring Facts of DNA Analyses

The third Indo-European wave of conquest was triggered by an extremely cold period with drought and desertification in the Eurasian steppes around 3,000. The mounted warrior peoples had become entirely nomadic and were once again encroaching upon Europe. From previous generations they already knew the routes to take, as well as the fact that there were fertile lands in the west. This time they did not come from the Caucasus, but again from the Volga region ("Late Yamnaya"), as indicated by hundreds of graves identical to those on the Volga, Don and Dnieper. This was a massive invasion that made Europe largely Indo-European.[15]

←365 | 366→Again, the gateway was the lower Danube basin (Romania, Bulgaria), again, they conquered the Carpathian basin in the middle part of the Danube (Hungary, Croatia), and again, this dramatically shifted peoples in all directions. But this time the early patriarchal societies displaced each other; those who had themselves been conquerors previously were conquered in turn. This third invasion caused the cultures of the previous second Indo-European wave in the Danube region to collapse, and people fled with their horses and cattle. Groups migrated westward to Bosnia and Dalmatia as far as the Adriatic coast, then moved south through the mountainous regions of Serbia, Albania and western Greece, where they built their strongholds on stony hills and their villages in sheltered caves. Mighty burial mounds for their chieftains, fully in the Maikop style, can be found where they passed.[16] They finally penetrated the Greek peninsula of the Peloponnese (Early Helladic culture, 2,800–2,500), reaching the Argolis, the plain on the Gulf of Argos (see Map 9). As they took over the land, the people of the old, matriarchal cultures in these countries were slaughtered or violently driven away, particularly evident in the destruction of the ancient cities in the Argolis, where the monumental temple of Lerna was also burnt down to the ground.[17] Everywhere, the previous ingenious architecture was replaced by fortresses with apsidal houses. However, the natives were not completely wiped out as the mounted warriors did not come in large numbers.[18] They invaded in small groups, but their hard, bronze weaponry and their mobile weapon, the horse, made them superior to the peaceful urban cultures. They therefore took over the status of ruling elite by brute force and maintained it with the same violence.

Other groups from displaced, early patriarchal societies went on an exodus north and west. Expelled from Hungary, the people of the so-called “Bell Beaker culture” first spread to Central Europe, and then moved far to the west in scattered groups, as far as the Iberian Peninsula and South England (2,500–2,100) (see Map 9). The beautiful bell beakers have been maintained over the centuries in all the scattered enclaves of this culture, indicating their ceremonial importance for these people. Other typical cultural features were copper daggers and bow and arrow, the bows resembling those of the steppe peoples. In fact, the bow-and-arrow weapon was so typical of them that they should really be called the ←366 | 367→“Archer culture,” since the conquests certainly did not take place through pottery but through weapons (Fig. 2).

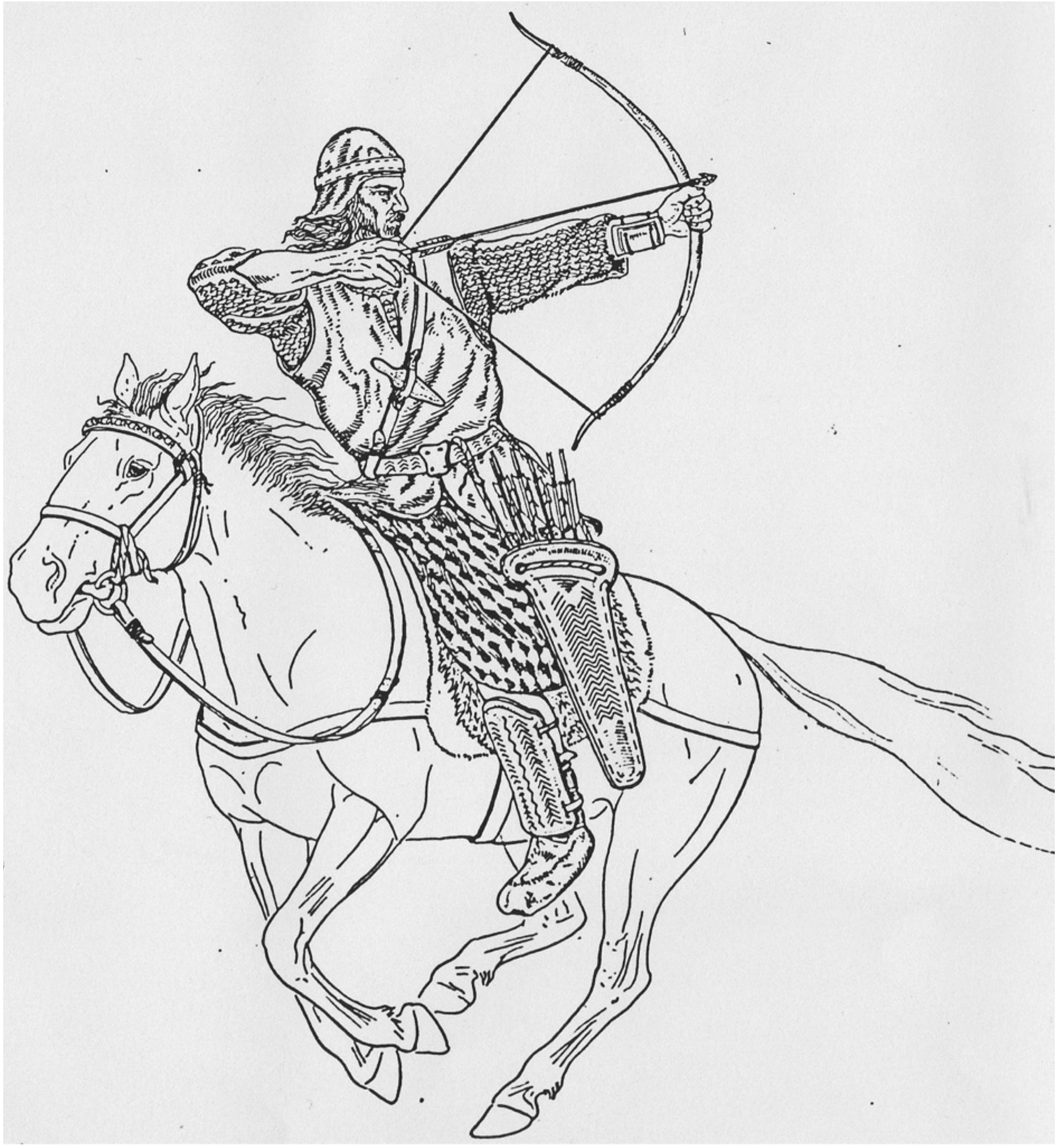


Fig. 2: Warrior of the Archer culture drawing his bow, and with arrows in his quiver, so-called “Bell Beaker culture”

In the area of Hungary which they had previously inhabited they bred horses on a large scale, preferring to live with them as semi-nomads or nomads, rather than settling down in one location. They were therefore extremely mobile when they emigrated, which explains the wide range of their distribution in Europe. Hardly any remains of their houses have been found, apart from the typical, rich individual burials of elite men under artificial hills. Many half-burned or incomplete skeletons of children were also present in the graves, indicating a new type of human sacrifice. To some extent cremation was a generalized practice due to their nomadic way of life, something that had already started in Hungary and had the advantage of no longer binding them, on religious grounds, to the graves of their chief-ancestors in specific locations.[19]

The semi-nomadic groups of the “Corded Ware culture” were another particular phenomenon, which at that same time ravaged the whole eastern, central ←367 | 368→and northern part of the European continent. They were named after the patterns of parallel imprints with cords, with which the women potters ornamented their unpainted pottery. The men, on the other hand, preferred to swing battle axes made of flint, which they used to smash the skulls of others. This contributed to this society also being called a “Battle-Ax culture,” which is certainly more appropriate for the above-mentioned reason (Fig. 3). The people from the Archer culture were displaced or absorbed by them.

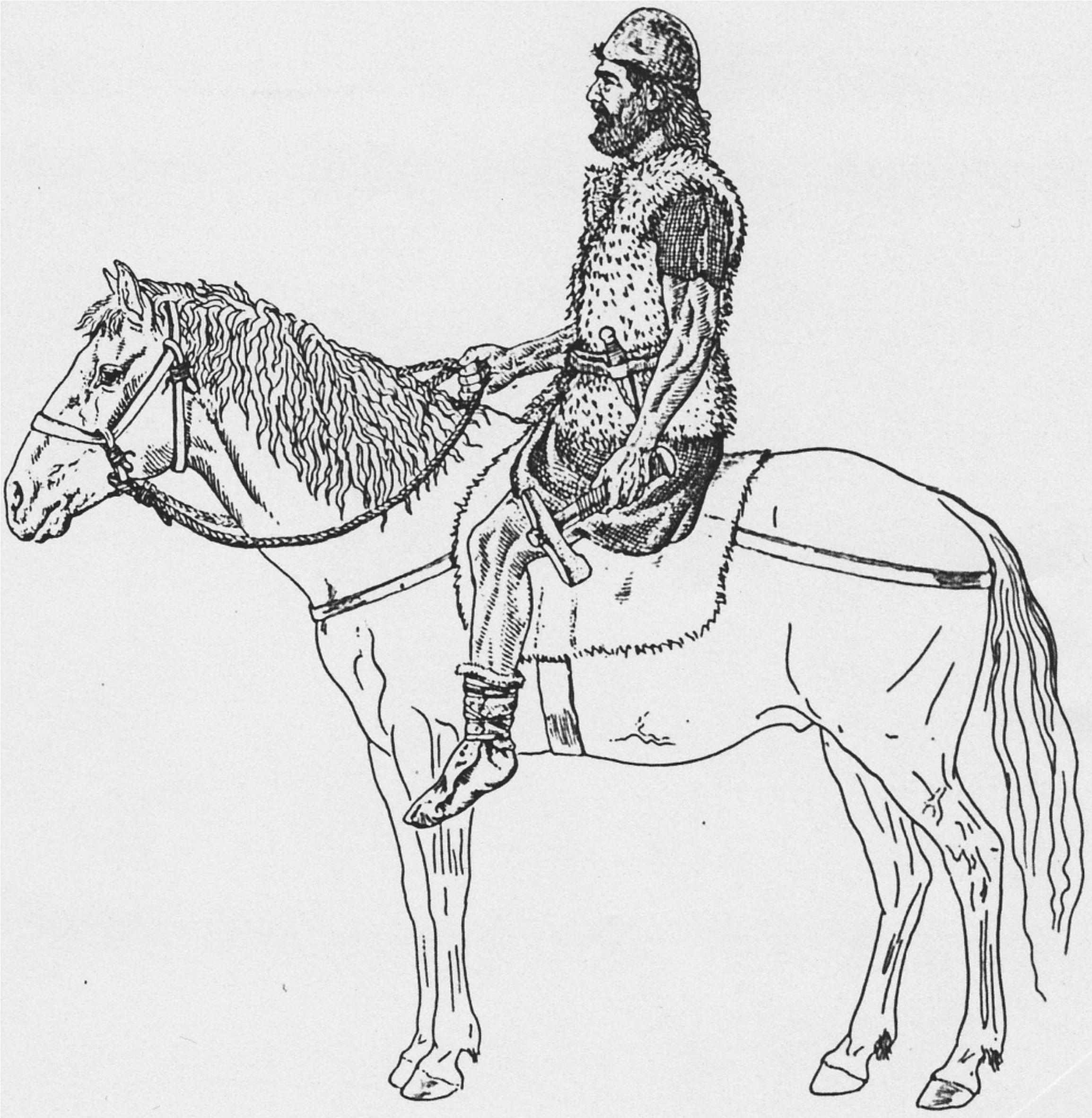


Fig. 3: Warrior of the Battle-ax culture with battle-ax and a flint dagger in his waistbelt, so-called “Corded Ware culture”

It is questionable whether they also came from the southeast or took another route for their invasion, as the way up the Danube was long and difficult, passing through many mountains, and had already been conquered and settled. Their exodus probably brought them directly from the upper reaches of the Volga, an easier route for them as the plains of West Russia, Poland and North Europe around the Baltic Sea, as well as North Germany up to the Rhine, lay open before ←368 | 369→them.[20] In fact, they exploited this land for themselves and their herds by burning down masses of the forests in the north to create large areas of steppe-like grassland for grazing.[21] They invaded here en masse, taking possession of large areas thanks to their mobile way of life, a fact that hugely expanded their culture (see Map 9). The Battle-Axe culture has uniform characteristics throughout this vast area from the Volga to the Rhine: the battle axes and corded ware and especially, once again, the typical burial mounds for the men at the top of the hierarchy. Due to their wandering nomadic way of life, remains of houses are largely absent, as it was easy for them to burn down their sunken huts, when they left. They allowed remnants of the Neolithic agrarian population to live side by side with them, probably because they already had enough space for their herds. Occasionally, these locals were degraded to the lower class, although this only happened when the new rulers stayed in the same place, and built strongholds and burial mounds.[22]

In this way, the early patriarchal cultures displaced each other, and at the same time mixed with the natives. For at that time, many cultural regions of the native, matriarchal population still remained, and some of these had also taken refuge in remote areas, such as forests, moors, mountains and islands, where they survived for a long time, even though their culture was reduced.[23] Moreover, they still existed as a subjugated class within most early patriarchal societies. The hundreds of graves found by archaeologists have shown that the Indo-European conquerors gradually changed in anthropological terms from East to West, with their differences to the native people decreasing, making the early patriarchal societies more and more homogeneous. This suggests they increasingly mixed together with the native population, although we will see below what “mixing” means in this context.

In the description of the Indo-Europeanization of Europe, we have largely followed Marija Gimbutas’ migration theory, developed based on extensive ←369 | 370→archaeological research.[24] However, her theory depicting the dramatic clash between two completely opposite forms of society: the matriarchal and the early patriarchal, in early Europe, has been strongly attacked. The fact that Indo-European invasions occurred at all has been contested, as Indo-Europeans had allegedly lived as farmers in Anatolia since the 7th millennium and had peacefully immigrated to Europe from there; that is, the entire Neolithic culture in Europe was attributed to Indo-Europeans. These were considered patriarchal from the outset, obscuring the idea of a matriarchal Neolithic period, together with the corresponding finds.[25] But this "Anatolia theory" was rejected from the beginning by linguists. They found that early Indo-European vocabulary referred to nomadic lifestyle and animal breeding and did not include terms for agriculture. Only quite late words for agricultural activities were added to the Indo-European vocabulary through acculturation with the agricultural, native peoples already living in Europe.[26]

New DNA analyses, however, have completely clarified this issue by identifying two major migratory flows into Europe:

- Firstly, a large-scale Neolithic immigration from Anatolia in the 7th millennium by people who were not Indo-Europeans; this immigration brought women and men to Europe in equal parts; that is, they arrived with whole families and clans (Neolithic epoch);
- Secondly, as from 3,500, large waves of invasion, originated by Indo-Europeans; this time almost exclusively men arrived who possessed new technologies (Early Bronze Age).[27]

←370 | 371→The results of these DNA analyses definitely confirm the migration theory of Gimbutas.[28] Moreover, as described by her, they point to two different social phenomena: one wave of immigration by clans with both sexes, and another wave with almost only male members.[29] This proves a peaceful immigration in the beginning of the Neolithic epoch; otherwise these people would not have set out with an equal number of women with children. In contrast, the Indo-European invasion (the largest and last here) consisted almost exclusively of men arriving with new weapon technology, suggesting warlike conquerors.

There is a third issue in addition to these findings by the DNA analyses:

- Concurrent with Indo-European immigration, the men from the native population almost disappeared from the genetic data, while a disproportionately large number of native women were “assimilated.”[30]

Put bluntly, this means that the conquerors brutally wiped out the men from the native cultures. What happened to the women, then? They hardly “assimilated” voluntarily to a way of life in which their status would be of the lowest level, having previously lived in matriarchal clans with a central position and great respect for women. This “assimilation” included the women being abducted, raped, and forced into marriage with the conquerors, unless they preferred death. The women were absolutely vital for these male invading hordes as, without them, their society would have remained childless and would have died out in the next generation.

From now on the women were forced to live in patrilineal and patrilocal marriage, and we know what that means: compared to their previous lives with the utmost freedom, they now were kept like prisoners, for they were considered the men’s private property, whether they were abducted or exchanged for a few cattle. Their main task was to bear “legitimate” sons as heirs to their husbands. These were the conditions for the men’s father-line, the pressure of which was borne by the women alone. In particular, chiefs were despotic patriarchs with power over women, children, servants and the clan, to such an extent that their widows, after having borne them enough sons, were considered useless and a nuisance, and consequently among the most frequent human sacrifices. There was nothing about this way of life that could have made the native matriarchal women join it except violence.

←371 | 372→

The men’s need to have women in order for their society to continue is the real reason for the frequent “mixing” of the conquerors with the natives. In research, this is trivialized as “exogamous marriage” (marriage outside one’s own clan) and “social integration.”[31] In practice, however, it was rape by foreigners and a lifelong pressure to adapt and thus the opposite of integration. It is obvious that the so-called “mixing” increased from East to West, because the further these groups of warring invaders advanced into Europe, the longer they must have already associated sexually with the native women.

In spite of these DNA results, which indicate no inclination towards peace at all, the euphemistic use of language by archaeologists and palaeogeneticists continues. It has been stated that “peaceful interaction and marriage between the culturally and genetically diverse groups formed the basis of daily social life.”[32] Allegedly there were only small “episodes of conflict”—just like in the peaceful, patriarchal marriages! But at the same time it is also stated that this epoch was more dramatic than expected.[33] Before these revealing DNA analyses existed, the widely held opinion was there would have been no clash at all between two different forms of society, as the Neolithic people already had “patrilocal” families and were used to “elites” who hoarded their grain.[34] The claim was that, in the midst of the Neolithic epoch, patriarchal patterns had developed by themselves as a stealthy evolution towards the “maturing of male dominance”,[35] so to speak, from within egalitarian societies, and that the native people accepted the new elites of the conquerors without any problem. But then the study of their genes has revealed such drama! This strange contradiction reveals a tendency to conceal and a refusal to acknowledge the fact that an extremely destructive clash took place between two opposing forms of society, the Indo-European one being evidently patriarchal. So, what was the other culture like, the one that had existed before? It is only too clear that the concept and notion of “matriarchal societies” must be avoided at all cost, as this would shake the patriarchal worldview and reveal the patriarchal violence that still prevails today. Marija Gimbutas has clearly called these two forms of society by their names, and the archaeological establishment has not forgiven her for it.[36]

←372 | 373→

The mixed societies of the Bronze Age were formed from this extremely difficult union between Indo-European conquerors and women taken by force from subjugated matriarchal cultures. Although their social order remained patriarchal, they incorporated elements from the conquered cultures, and the resulting combination varied greatly in each particular European society of the Bronze Age. There were still a number of peoples and ethnic groups existing within a late matriarchal culture, which is especially true for Europe south of the Alps. As a result, the Bronze Age in southern Europe looks quite different and emerged from a different dynamic than in northern Europe; it also began much earlier.

Let us first turn towards the developments in southern Europe.

Late Matriarchal Societies and Patriarchalization in South Europe

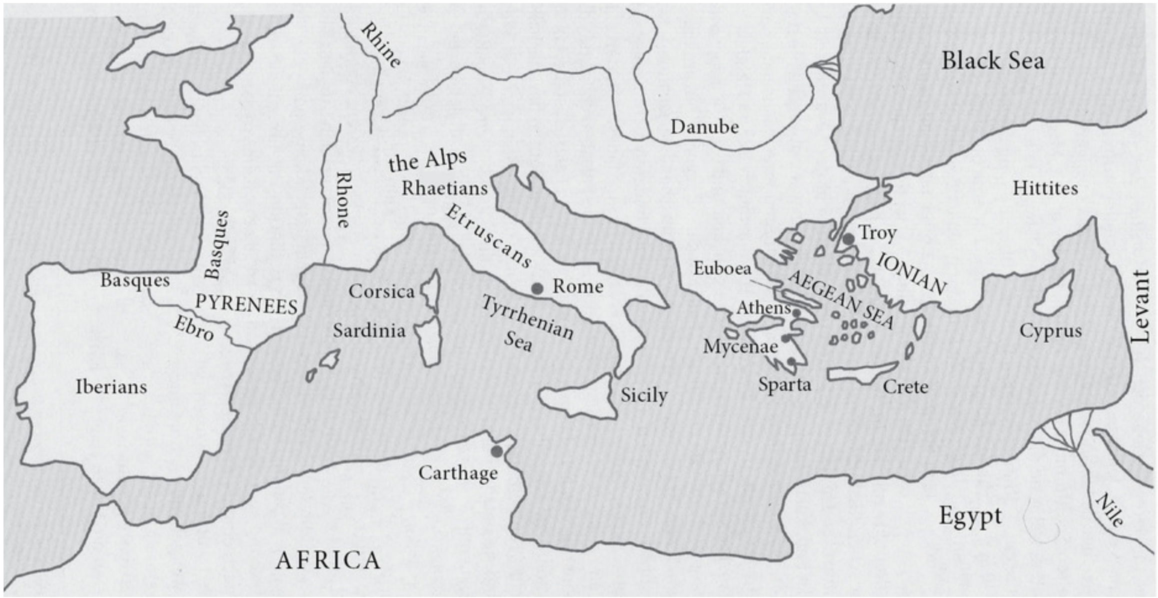
Chronology

Late 4th mill. to mid-2nd mill. (3,200/1,450 BCE):	Bronze Age on Crete, Minoan Culture
Mid to late 2nd mill. (1,400–1,100 BCE):	Late Bronze Age in Greece, Mycenaean Culture
Late 2nd mill. to 4th century (1,100–371/338 BCE):	Iron Age in Greece, Dorians, Athenians, Ionians
End 4th century BCE until after 0:	Hellenistic era
From the 1st mill. to the 1st century BCE:	Iron Age in Italy, Etruscan Culture
Mid-2nd to mid-1st mill. (1,600–900 BCE):	Bronze Age in Sardinia, Nuragic Culture

←373 | 374→The coasts and islands of the Aegean Sea do not have large areas of land like Mesopotamia. As a result, no states based on complicated irrigation systems and centralized storage formed there. The climate is hot and dry, and agriculture depends on small rivers, which usually only carry water during the rainy season in winter. The economy was and is small-scale and specialized in particular goods such as wine, oil and fruit; flocks of sheep and goats tend to be small. These conditions do not allow for a high population density, so it was vital for the cultures of the Aegean region to migrate and find new land. This led to the development of seafaring peoples who influenced the societies around the Aegean. In the course of their history they gradually spread to the central and western Mediterranean, where the geographical and economic situation was similar.

The Minoan Culture of Crete: Sailors and Priestesses

The Aegean Sea was on the margins of the social development of West Asia. But this was favorable for its island cultures which could develop undisturbed for a long time, and the large island of Crete is the best example of this (Map 10). The Old Cretan culture continued to develop without interruption from its beginnings in the early Neolithic (around 7,000) to the late Bronze Age (around 1,450), that is, for more than 5,500 years. It therefore provides an example of the high point to which a matriarchal society can flourish. The origin of the Neolithic culture of Crete is in western Anatolia, beginning earlier than on the Greek mainland (Thessaly Basin and Argolis, from 6,600). It had started in the pre-pottery period, with the cultivation of fields and typical domestic animals. When the pottery period also began here, the vessels showed a highly individual style right from the start, bearing no resemblance to either the eastern or western cultures of the Mediterranean.[37]


Rhine
Black Sea
Danube
the Alps
Rhaetians
Rhone
Hittites
Etruscans
Troy
Basques
Basques
IONIAN
Euboea
Corsica
Rome
PYRENEES
AEGEAN SEA
Athens
Ebro
Tyrrhenian Sea
Levant
Sardinia
Cyprus
Mycenae
Iberians
Sparta
Crete
Sicily
Carthage
Egypt
Nile
AFRICA

Map 10: South Europe and the Mediterranean area in Bronze Age and Early Iron Age

←374 | 375→This island therefore had a special position from the very beginning, and the Old Cretan culture continued to develop with particular creativity. The early period of the Minoan culture in Crete, the “Pre-Palatial period” (3,200–2,100), corresponds to the Early Bronze Age.[38] During this time, further immigration from the western coast of Asia Minor (Anatolia) took place, new settlements being established in the east and south of the island.[39] The newcomers brought ←375 | 376→rapid cultural progress: not only bronze metallurgy emerged, but also large houses and tombs were built. Refined ceramic art also flourished, which can be seen in elegant vases and new shapes for vessels, as well as beautiful seals and perfect jewels. It is generally accepted that Cretan society was egalitarian in this period, because the large buildings were clan houses and the elaborate burial structures were community graves.[40] In other words: here we find the same matriarchal organization as was customary in Anatolia.

In the middle period of the Minoan culture, the “Old Palace period” (2,100–1,700), there was another, unusually rapid upswing of the Old Cretan culture, due to the invention of a new type of ship. The Cretans developed boats with keels, enabling them to sail the open sea relatively safely, while the previous keel-less boats capsized easily and were only suitable for coastal navigation, turning every crossing of the open sea into a dangerous undertaking. For a society on an island in the middle of the sea, this invention was pure necessity. With such seaworthy ships the Cretans could now establish permanent overseas routes to any country in the eastern Mediterranean. They not only intensified their contacts with the islands of the Aegean, the Greek mainland and the coastal cities of Asia Minor, but also sailed the eastern Mediterranean to distant countries such as Syria and Palestine in the Levant, and Egypt in North Africa (see Map 10). This was also necessary for them, because the limited land on their mountainous island could no longer feed a growing population, so the Cretans began to expand their trade vigorously. Their crafts were highly developed and they produced, among other things, the beautiful, exquisitely painted ceramics in “Kamares style,” much sought after in other countries. Specialized groups of female artisans, and male merchants and seafarers emerged, and urban centers formed: Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia, Kato Zakros, Kydonia, Kommos, Palaikastro, and Archanes. From the urban cultures on the coast of West Asia they adopted palace architecture, which at that time did not exist anywhere else in Europe. In Crete, however, these “palaces” are more accurately called “temple palaces,” since they were not monuments to imperial dominance in Crete, but rather religious buildings.[41] Their orientation was generally east-west, and they had three floors of rooms grouped irregularly around a rectangular courtyard in the center, which was always of the same considerable size. Religious ceremonies were celebrated in the courtyard, and in the rooms around it contained numerous shrines, murals and cult objects of a religious nature (Fig. 4 a, b). Each temple palace included a continuous sewage system, workshops for handicrafts, as well as storage rooms for agricultural products marked with religious symbols, and rooms for a written administration, all a legacy from the urban coastal cultures of West Asia. No pompous throne hall or royal residence rooms have been found in these temple palaces, except for a sanctuary with low benches around the walls and a delicate stone seat with a backrest in the middle (Knossos), which does not look like a ruler’s throne (Fig. 5).[42]

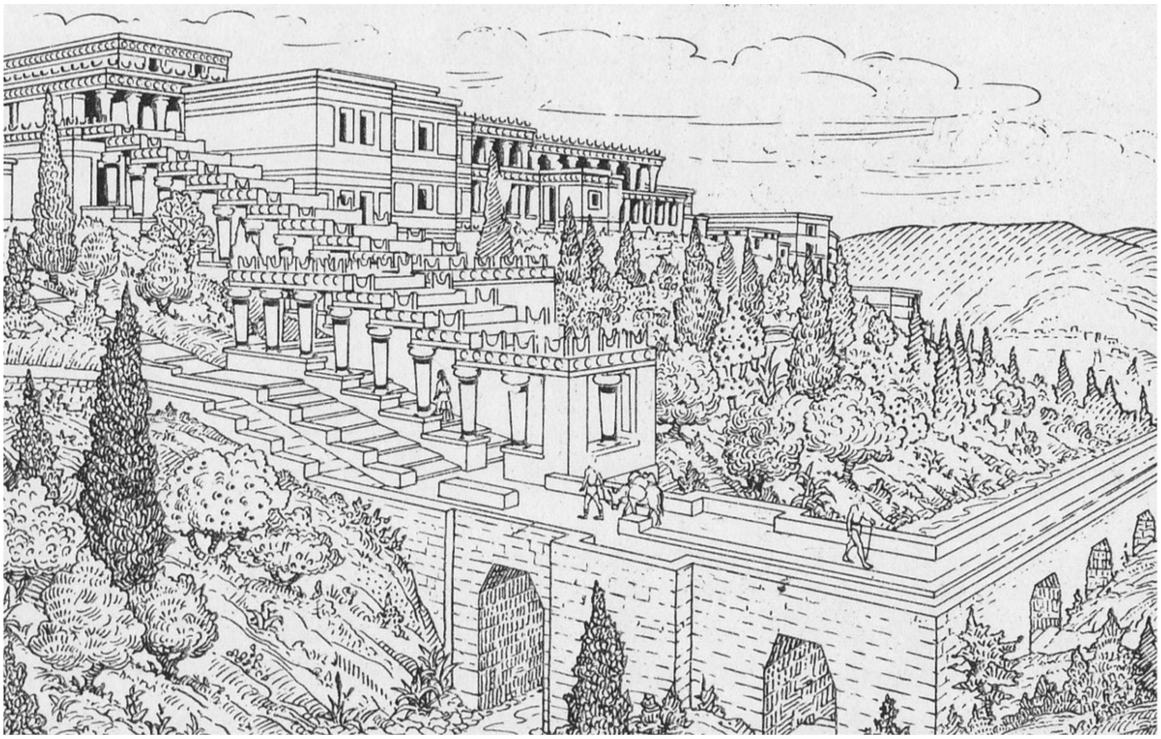


Fig. 4a: The temple palace of Knossos, reconstruction of the south porch (Minoan Crete)

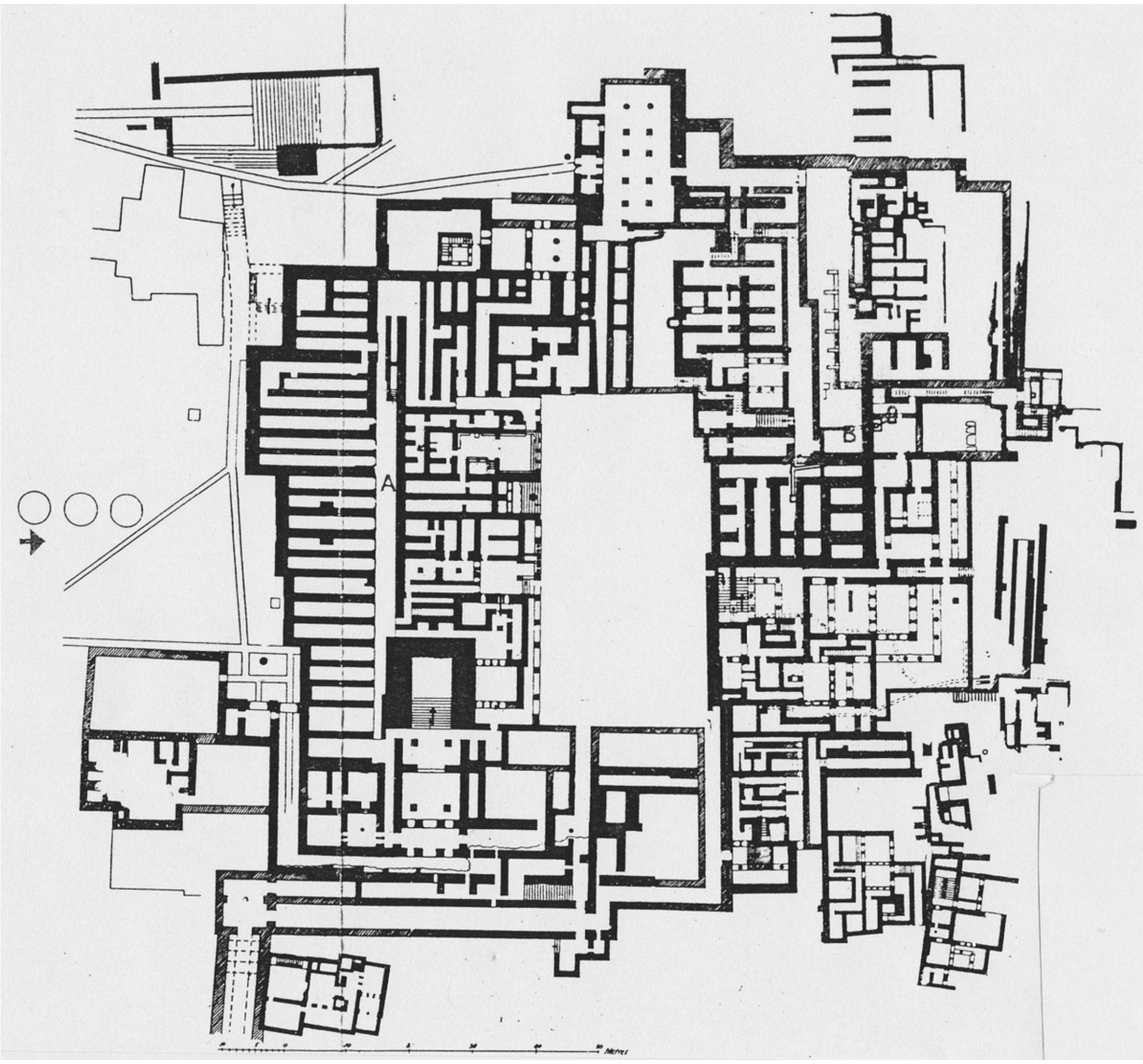

A
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Fig. 4b: Plan view of the temple palace of Knossos

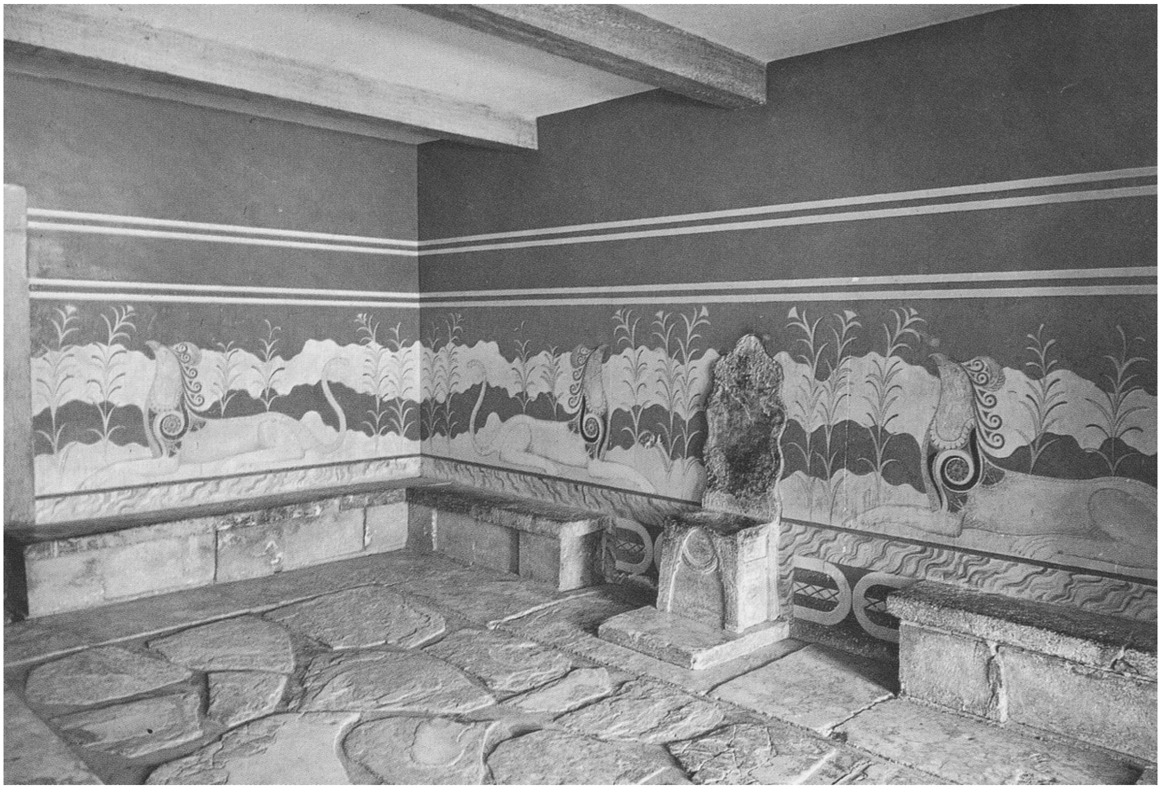

Fig. 5: Stone throne in the sanctuary of Knossos

Around 1,700 the buildings of the Minoan culture were largely destroyed by a series of severe earthquakes, thus ending the Old Palace period. However, this does not seem to have discouraged the Cretans, as they enthusiastically rebuilt their houses and temple palaces exactly as before, suggesting to a strong, religiously motivated attachment to the sites. In this “New Palace period” (1,700–1,450 BCE) they brought their culture to a peak that surpassed all previous ones, to the extent that it was equal to those of Mesopotamia and Egypt, albeit not in size, but in splendor. The beauty and elegance of this culture has astonished all scholars studying it, and it has been said that “it radiates a unique charm and the most complete affirmation of the loveliness of life the world has ever seen.”[43] There is a reason for this, which we will look at.

During this period, Old Crete became a maritime civilization with a vast trading network, and Minoan merchants sailed the entire Aegean region with a large fleet. At the same time, they made the sea routes safer by decisively putting an end to piracy.[44] They set up bases on some islands, as well as on the coasts of Greece and Anatolia, so-called “colonies.” These were not military bases, however, but trading settlements consisting of small communities of Cretan merchants who lived there. However, their influence on the local population was big, and in all places numerous elements from the Minoan culture were adopted: types of ←377 | 378→building, clothing style, writing, as well as measures and weights, art forms and styles, as well as religious rites.[45]

The ancient Greeks called this Cretan trade network a “thalassocracy,” that is, naval supremacy—a completely mistaken term that has been used again and again.[46] It is wrong because the Cretans had no armed forces nor did they dominate. There is no archaeological evidence to suggest that there has ever been a Cretan military or ruling administration in the so-called “colonies.” To control the scattered Aegean island world with its mobile inhabitants traveling the sea would have required a huge battle fleet, which did not exist anywhere in the Aegean during the Bronze Age. A system of exploitation was not possible, as has been proved by the short lifespan of the attempts in this direction undertaken later by the Athenian Greeks.[47] This shows that there was no Minoan naval supremacy, nor any King Minos at the head of the Old Cretan culture to enforce it.

←378 | 379→We now are going to explore whether Crete’s Bronze Age culture had matriarchal patterns up to its last phase—which has often been assumed and just as often been denied. *Joan Cichon* has highlighted the matriarchal patterns of the Minoan culture superbly in her publications, and I follow her arguments in broad outline in regard to economy and social order.[48] Cichon draws on the definition of “matriarchy” in modern Matriarchal Studies, which gave her some guidance.

←379 | 380→To be able to answer the question of matriarchal patterns, we first need to include the sphere of activity of women, which is regularly neglected by researchers in comparison with the activities carried out by menAs tends to happen, the male domain of seafaring and trade, stylized as “Minoan thalassocracy,” has received excessive attention. However, women were very much present in the public life of Minoan society, as documented by the colored murals in houses and temple palaces, as well as by miniature frescoes and engravings on signet rings.

For example, the small “Grandstand Fresco” from Knossos shows beautifully dressed and artfully coiffed women sitting on tribunes on both sides of a small, three-part shrine, animatedly talking to each other (Fig. 6 a, b). All of them are depicted in detail and are dressed in the typical Minoan costume consisting of a multi-layered skirt trimmed with flounces and a tight bodice that leaves the breasts uncovered. In matriarchal cultures, women’s bare breasts have no sexual association, but are a sign of their motherliness. The seated women are surrounded by a large assembly of men, of whom only the heads are summarily represented; their brown-red skin color is characteristic for men, while women are always depicted with white skin. Visibly, these women occupy a central position, as they sit in the places of honor, whilst no prominent male figure is to be seen. ←380 | 381→The decoration of the sanctuary consists of stylized white bull horns on the roof ridges, the central symbol of the Minoan culture that characterizes all religious buildings. This is a lunar symbol with a very ancient history and is also abundant in the Neolithic epoch of Anatolia and West Asia.[49] The white horns stand for the crescent moon and refer to the secrets of life, death, and rebirth. Their hollow form also symbolizes the female womb (uterus), as it is the woman who gives new life to the female and male ancestors.[50] Therefore, the women in this sanctuary are not “chatting court ladies,” but priestesses at a public act.

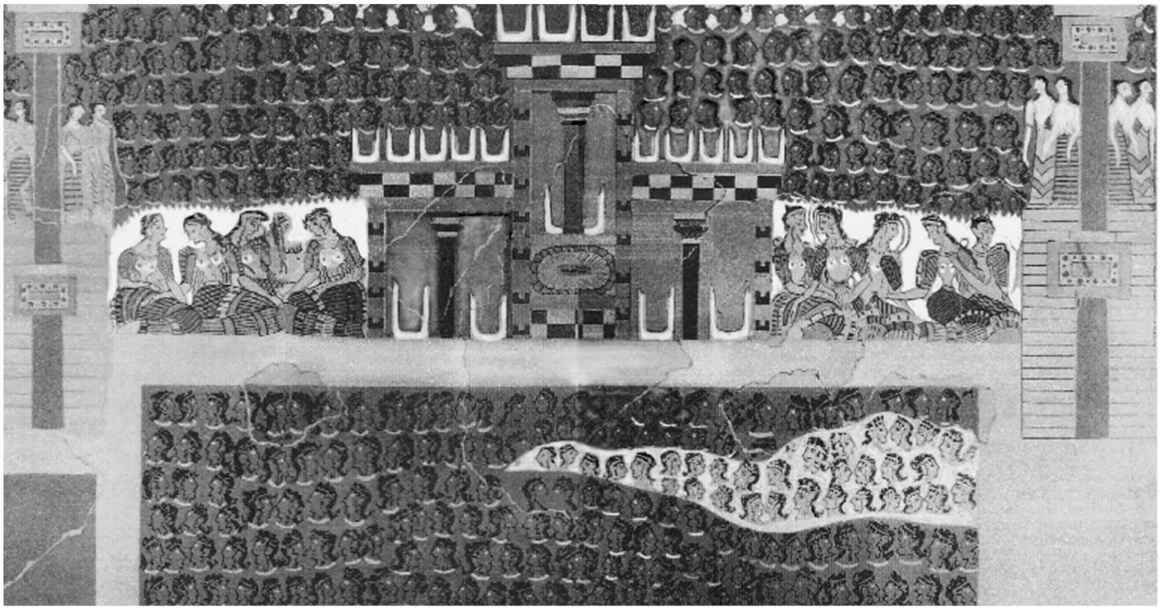

Fig. 6a: Priestesses sitting at a sanctuary, surrounded by a crowd of people. So-called “Grandstand Fresco” from Knossos (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

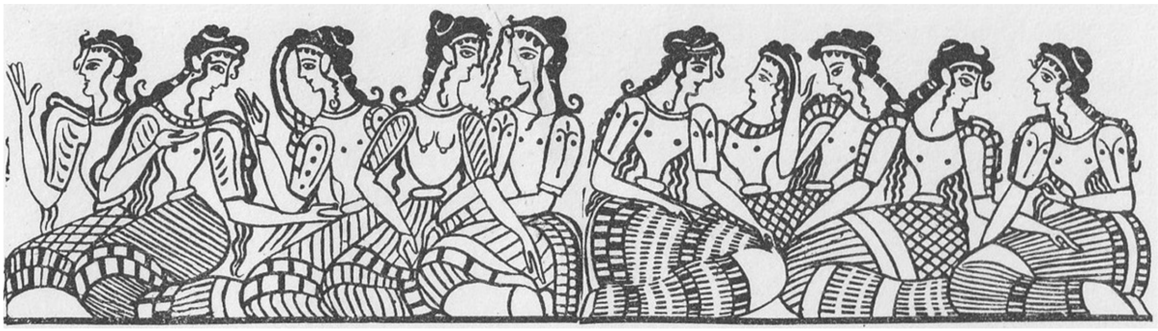

Fig. 6b: Detail of the “Grandstand Fresco” from Knossos

←381 | 382→A second example is the miniature “Sacred Grove or Dance Fresco” from Knossos, which also shows priestesses in long tiered skirts performing a dance in a sacred grove (Fig. 7). Again, a large assembly is present, with some women watching, drawn in detail and with a white skin, sitting in the center under two trees. They are surrounded by a large number of other women. At a respectful distance behind them, a big crowd of men is outlined briefly, their heads again brown-red. The priestesses wear the same robes as the women watching; they do not seem to have any special equipment or religious symbols of power. For this reason, such scenes have sometimes been misunderstood as “popular entertainment” or “courtly etiquette.” However, they are religious ceremonies performed by priestesses, for profane paintings were unknown to these early cultures.[51]

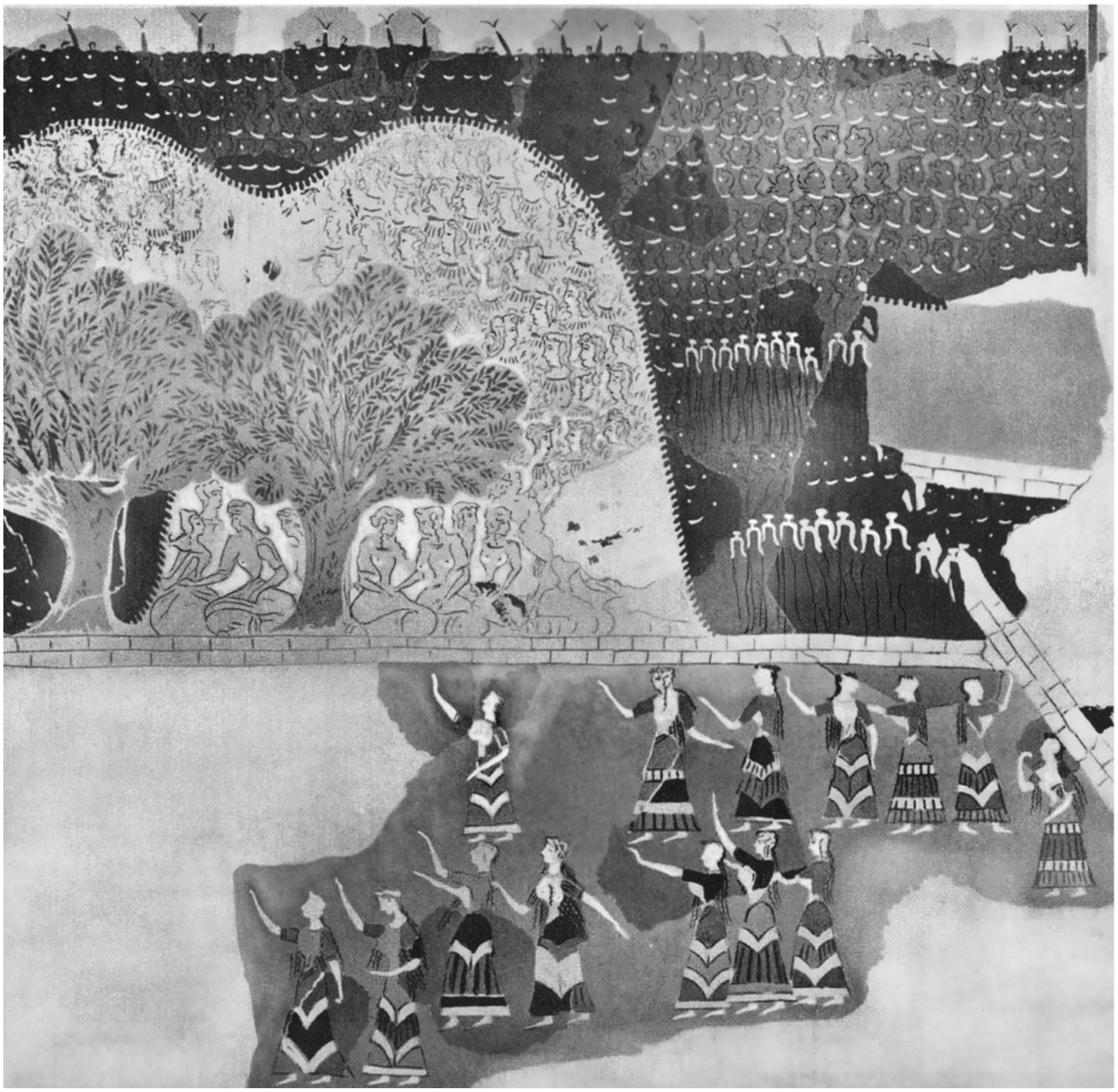

Fig. 7: Priestesses dancing in a sacred grove in front of a crowd of people. So-called “Sacred Grove or Dance Fresco” from Knossos (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

Women clearly play an active part in these ceremonies and rituals, while men only accompany them. This applies from the early days of the

Old Cretan culture ←382 | 383→up to the last phase. The famous sarcophagus of Hagia Triada (1,450–1,300) is an example of this, with its colorful painted depiction of a ceremony for a deceased person. Priestesses perform the central actions here as well. A priestess is to be seen on one of the two long sides of the sarcophagus, dressed in a long blue robe with a corolla on her head, which identifies her as the First Priestess; she leads a procession of women (Fig. 8 a). She stretches out her arms and touches the sacrificed bull with her fingertips, which is tied to a table in the center. Another priestess in a pelt skirt offers up a libation and a bowl of fruit in front of a small sanctuary. A musician, a man with a double flute in a woman’s robe, is striding behind the bull. His attire is noticeable here, as Minoan men generally wear a short loincloth.[52] On the other long side of the sarcophagus are two priestesses carrying small buckets of the blood from the sacrificed bull, pouring it into a cauldron (Fig. 8 b). Again, one is dressed in a beautiful blue robe and wears the corolla while the other is in a pelt skirt, so they are probably the same persons. Here, too, a male musician in a long woman’s robe follows them, playing the lyre, while three other men carry offerings to the tomb of the deceased. These scenes clearly show that it was the women who performed the religious ceremonies, while men participated as helpers. The fact that men wore women’s clothes was a widespread custom in the cultures of the time, either as protection, because here they were moving in the female sphere of action, or to participate in the feminine ←383 | 384→divine energy.[53] The sacred pillars in the paintings, topped by labryses, refer to the rebirth religion, the domain of women since ancient times. The labrys, or double ax, is also an ancient lunar symbol, because its two curved blades stand for the crescent moon, waxing and waning, at the same time representing the wings of a stylized butterfly, also a symbol of death, transformation and rebirth (see Fig. 26 of Chapter 4).[54]

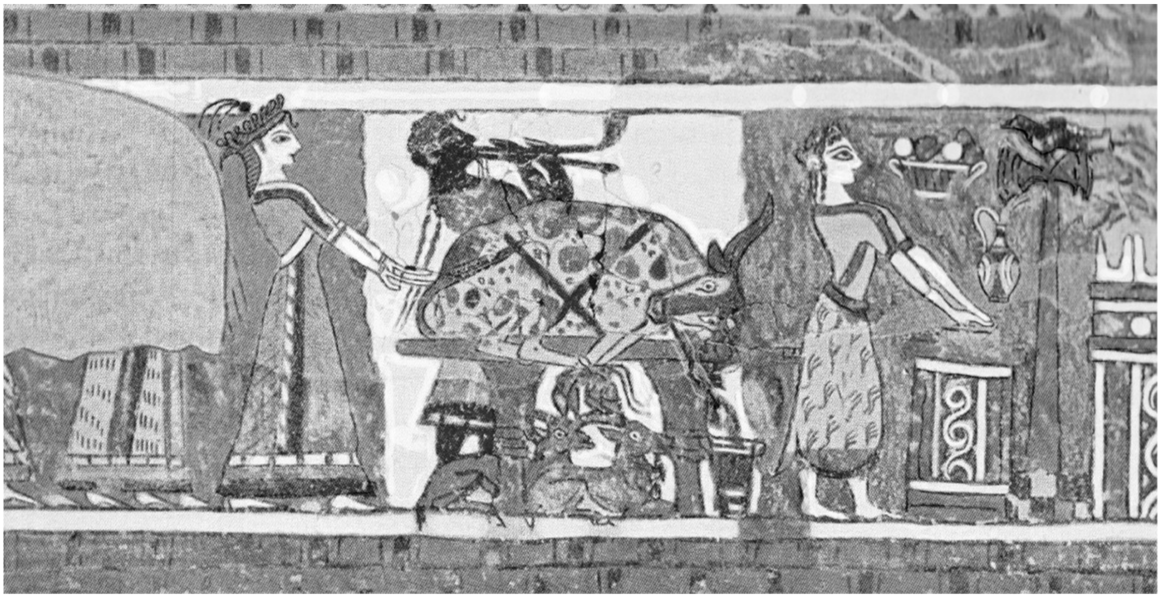

Fig. 8a: Priestesses guiding a ceremony with a sacrificed bull.

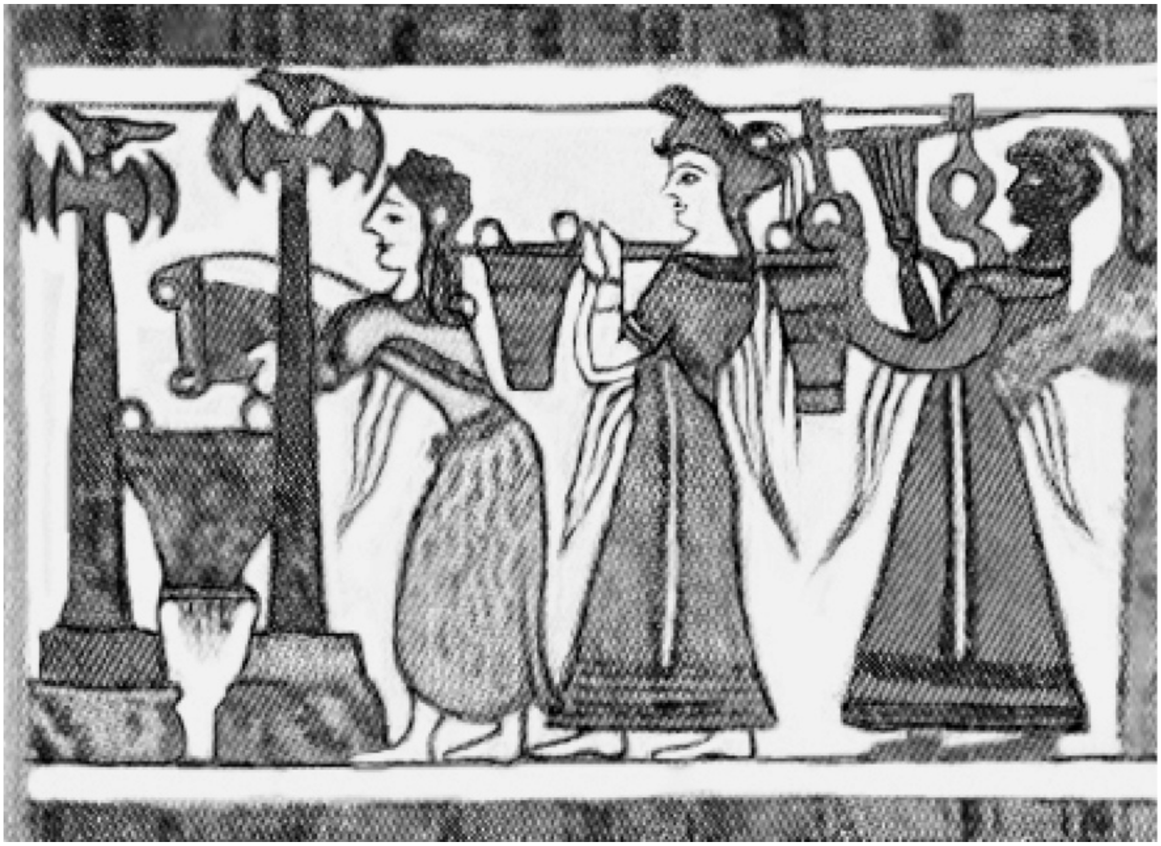

Fig. 8b: Priestesses pouring the blood of the sacrificed bull into a cauldron. Paintings on the two long sides of the sarcophagus from Hagia Triada (Minoan Crete)

Religion was by no means secondary but central in ancient Crete. Thus, in Minoan culture, all artworks have religious significance. Scenes of a religious nature are everywhere, in large and small murals, on vases, cups, seals, gold rings, jewels and statuettes. The deity was basically understood as female, without any male equivalent. Goddesses appear in many shapes and activities: as the Mistress of Animals between two lions or two griffins, as the Mother goddess with child, as the Bee goddess or with bull horns on her head, as the Snake goddess in the two famous faience statues of Knossos.[55] This diversity may point to the many aspects of a single goddess, the Great Goddess of Crete, who was worshiped under ←384 | 385→various names: as youthful Britomartis, as the star goddess Ariadne, as the goddess of birth Eileithyia, as the mother goddess Diktynna with the divine child, as the earth goddess Rhea or Demeter, as the goddess of snakes, whose name has not survived.[56] In many guises she was the goddess of the three spheres of the world: Heaven, Earth and Underworld, the typical threefold Great Goddess of matriarchal cultures.[57]

Goddesses also appear at each end of the sarcophagus of Hagia Triada, sitting in pairs on two-wheeled chariots and adorned with crowns (Fig. 8 c). One pair with feathers on their crowns is driving a chariot with two sphinxes, mythical creatures with the body of a lioness and with wings and a bird’s head; these goddesses come from the upper world, from Heaven. The chariot of the other pair is being drawn by two black mountain goats, earthly animals whose dark color indicates that these two goddesses probably come from the Underworld. All four were summoned, by the sacrifice of the priestesses, to lead the deceased safely into the Otherworld, which could be in the depths of the earth or in heaven.

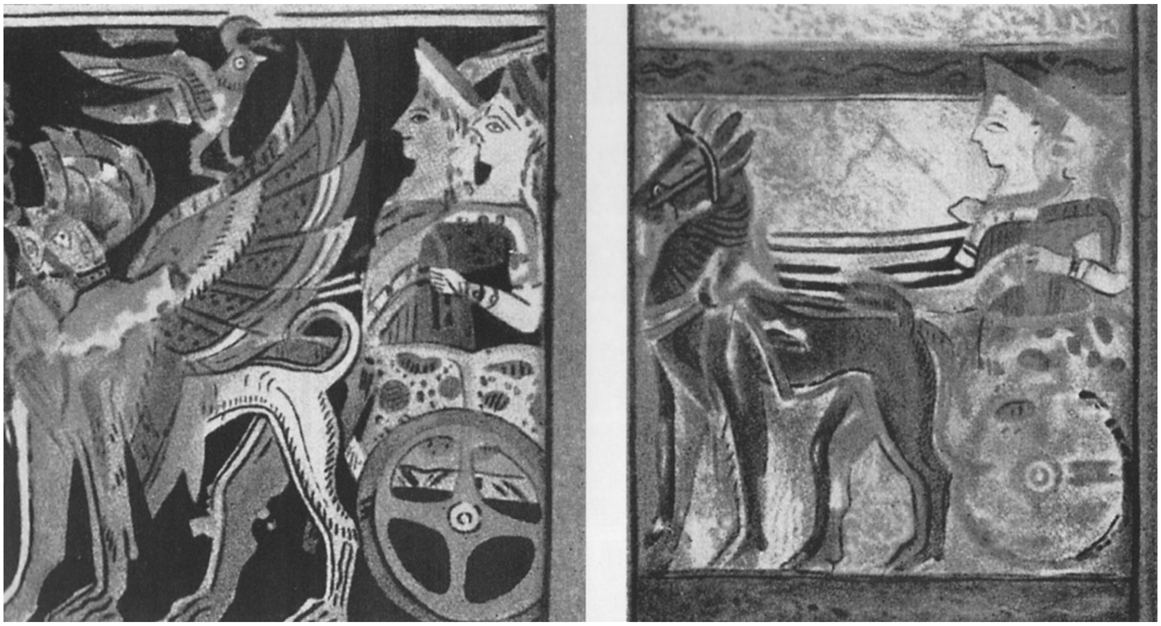

Fig. 8c: Goddesses in chariots with a team of sphinxes (left) and a team of mountain goats (right). Paintings on the two narrow sides of the sarcophagus from Hagia Triada (Minoan Crete) (Drawings 8 a-c by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann; 8 b section from the original image)

←385 | 386→Women as priestesses are also found on numerous signet rings, standing in front of small temples decorated with white bull horns; or praying with raised hands; or embracing holy shrines, holy trees and holy stones; or performing ecstatic dances; or riding on a sacred boat. They are always gracefully and deeply moved, devoted to communicating with the divine powers.[58] One can also see priestesses blessing the men's seafaring pursuits from the top of high buildings and towers.[59] Religion was visibly the organizing and integrating element of public life in Minoan culture. In this respect, Old Crete was a *sacred society and a thea-cracy*, as was also the case of the early Sumerian cities and those on the coasts of West Asia, until it was ended by patriarchal tendencies. Ancient Crete, however, was able to preserve its thea-cracy until the late period of the Minoan culture.

Consequently, the Cretan temple palaces as centers of religious practice in this thea-cracy did not have a "king's throne." The stone seat at Knossos was therefore the place of honor for the First Priestess, who guarded the temple treasure, led the gatherings of people sitting on the benches, and embodied the Goddess in ceremonies. The elegant sphinxes flanking this seat as a mural also support the idea of a priestess, as sphinxes clearly belong to the sphere of goddesses (see Fig. 5). Similarly, a mural in Akrotiri (Santorini) shows a priestess on a raised seat with a sphinx at her back. At moment, she embodies the goddess and is presiding over a spring ceremony, as young women bring baskets full of crocuses (Fig. 9).[60]

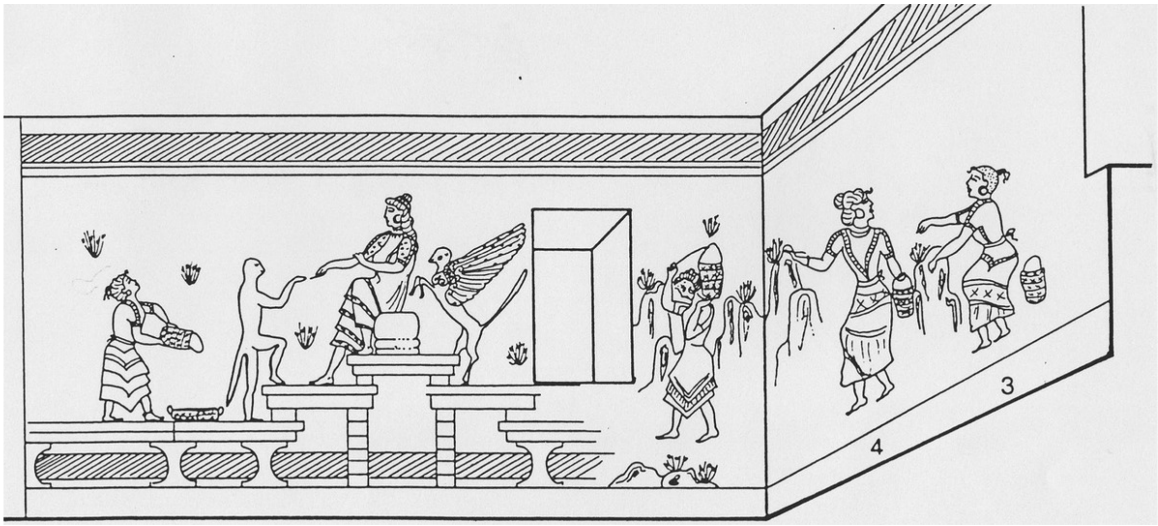

Fig. 9: Priestess on an elevated seat, flanked by a monkey and a sphinx, surrounded by gatherers of crocuses. Mural from Akrotiri, Thera, Xeste 3 (Minoan culture)

The design of the architecture was also based on religious ideas, as the three floors of the temple palaces were seen as a reflection of the three-tiered worldview of heaven-earth-underworld of the time.[61] The columns in the halls and corridors were painted in the three sacred colors of white-red-black: painted white on the top floor, corresponding to the light sphere of Heaven, red in the middle, corresponding to the living Earth, and black on the lower floor like the depth of the Underworld (Knossos).[62] Furthermore, religious relics such as altars, offerings, and symbols have been found not only in temple palaces but everywhere ←386 | 387→ in Crete: in the townhouses, in the large country houses or “villas,” in the caves of the mountains and on their peaks. The entire area of Crete was littered with religious sites and symbols, which shows that the whole island was considered a sacred space by the Minoans. In the ecstatic dances of the priestesses, documenting traditional shamanic practice, the goddess could be invoked anywhere in nature. Animals and plants were also seen as attributes or even manifestations of the goddess, and she even could appear in different features of the landscape—everything in nature could be her epiphany.

People therefore recreated nature in their own homes, in the form of artificial caves, tree-like columns and small ponds. Nature was brought into the house, particularly by vivid paintings of animals, plants and whole landscapes, so that even these paintings were not mere beautiful "decoration" but had religious significance. In this respect, the people saw no sharp divide between nature and the cultural environment. Minoan women and men experienced the world as a whole, as a continuum of divine energy that was present and could be communicated with everywhere and anywhere.[63] These are the typical characteristics of ←387 | 388→matriarchal spirituality, which can be perceived in the Old Cretan culture.[64] The deep spirituality of Minoan women permeated everything, resulting in a constant celebration of life, a celebration they were responsible for. This was probably why the Old Cretan culture was, on the one hand, misunderstood for a long time and, on the other, praised for its "unique charm" and "most complete affirmation of the loveliness of life."

Social Order in Crete: Consensus Politics and Matriarchal Clans

At this point, the next question is who had the temple palaces built as centers of religious practice, which were monumental complexes of buildings, as this also has to do with the internal social order of Minoan society. The prevailing theory claims that the Old Palace period brought the first state to Crete, because central people now operated from the central palaces and controlled the surrounding area. This is the usual idea that large buildings can only be planned and built by “elites,” assuming the exploitation of the people, which in turn requires state-operated enforcement. In the New Palace period, Knossos in northern Crete is said to have become the ruling center of the island, led by a priest-king and supported by aristocrats who owned the large country houses. In addition to the exploitation of the local population, taxes and tributes were now allegedly also levied on the colonies, so that great wealth could be accumulated in the palaces, controlled by a bureaucracy.[65]—But what was the military organization that led to this state machinery and enforced it? No trace has been found of the necessary arsenals of weapons on Crete, or any images of warriors or victorious rulers, and none of Crete’s temple palaces or large villas has any fortifications whatsoever. All we can see here is a projection from late Mesopotamia onto Minoan society, without any justification.

In the last two decades this image of Bronze Age Crete has changed considerably. Archaeologists have not found any large storage rooms in the so-called “royal palaces” where tributes could be amassed; all the storerooms were rather small. Even the artistic crafts that were a great “export success,” so to speak, and which would have enriched the rulers of Knossos, were not centralized here at all, but the exquisite Kamares ware was produced by female artists in southern Crete ←388 | 389→and could be found all over the island.[66] Similarly, no political centers can be identified, as the architecture, settlement patterns, and administration guidelines in the so-called “hinterland” of the palaces show that there was a great deal of regional independence and autonomy. There was also no competition between palaces in the sense of political “parties” vying for resources and power, as evidence is lacking of any demarcations such as ramparts and walls that would have protected them from each other.[67] The palaces were also not marked off from the ordinary settlements, not separated from the communities because they served them as places for assembly and ceremonies, that is, as temples—just as was the case with the large assembly buildings in the earliest Neolithic period of West Asia. Their openness to all sides and the absence of boundaries is a sign that the temple palaces were owned by the people, as well as the land on which they were built. They were the result of collective efforts by large communities to create religious buildings for their population. If demand increased, rooms could be added in loose groupings, making the buildings somewhat irregular. As is characteristic of religious ties to a location, temple palaces were built on sites that had already served as ritual sites in the Cretan Neolithic.[68] A “king” was just as unnecessary for their construction as an aristocratic “elite,” who are said to have built the large country houses or villas. These villas, on the other hand, were smaller temple palaces for a limited region, such as Hagia Triada, used by smaller communities for their meetings.[69]

Moreover, the communities did not consist of arbitrary groups, but of clans living in the villages or quarters of the cities. The individual regions, as well as society as a whole, were permeated by a horizontal network autonomous at a local and regional level. Policies were created by consensus, through the agreement of the respective clans at meetings which were linked to the celebration of ceremonies. It was a well-structured, egalitarian clan-based society.[70] Larger clan alliances not only formed the basis for the construction of each region’s temple palaces, but they also carried out maritime trade with groups of seafarers and merchants, serving each other mutually with their special skills.[71] For even in maritime trade there is no evidence of any Minoan fights due to competition.

The temple palaces also served as places for economic sharing between the regional clans during council meetings and festivities. Archaeologists have found enormous quantities of tableware in these buildings, indicating lavish consumption during eating and drinking ceremonies when the temple’s supply of natural produce was consumed by the community. Other goods from the material culture also circulated, as was the case not only with the beautiful Cretan artifacts, but also with objects from the island’s sea trade, which have been found in general distribution by researchers. In other words, there were no elites who kept and hoarded such exotic luxury goods for themselves.[72] Those who produced special objects, such as the female artists of ceramics, or had acquired them from overseas, such as the merchants, passed them on as gifts, so the material culture was characterized by a high level of prosperity. This is also supported by the stylistic themes, which resemble each other throughout Crete, and the similarity of the symbolic representations. All this points to a typical matriarchal economy of reciprocity and balance, whose driving force are community celebrations where various goods circulate as gifts, thereby balancing out economic disparities and bringing about general prosperity.[73]

These eating and drinking ceremonies were by no means profane, for they were conducted by priestesses, as can be seen from the rather trivially named “Campstool Fresco” (Fig. 10). Here we can see seven festively dressed persons of honor sitting on light chairs, each being served by an equally festively dressed companion who is pouring liquid from a jar or handing them a full goblet. All ←390 | 391→the people are of equal size and all men. Only two honorary persons have been depicted as women with white skin and long black curls, with their hair tied at the neck in a priestess knot. These are the priestesses who are offering the food and drink and leading the ritual. It is amazing that, in this scene, all the men without exception are wearing long women’s garments, indicating the special sacredness of the act. It could be that a unanimous agreement has just been reached after a consensus-finding process, be it for a sea expedition or a construction project, both being the responsibility of men. Such unity, finally gained, strengthened the community and attracted the blessing of the goddess, so this scene also has religious content.

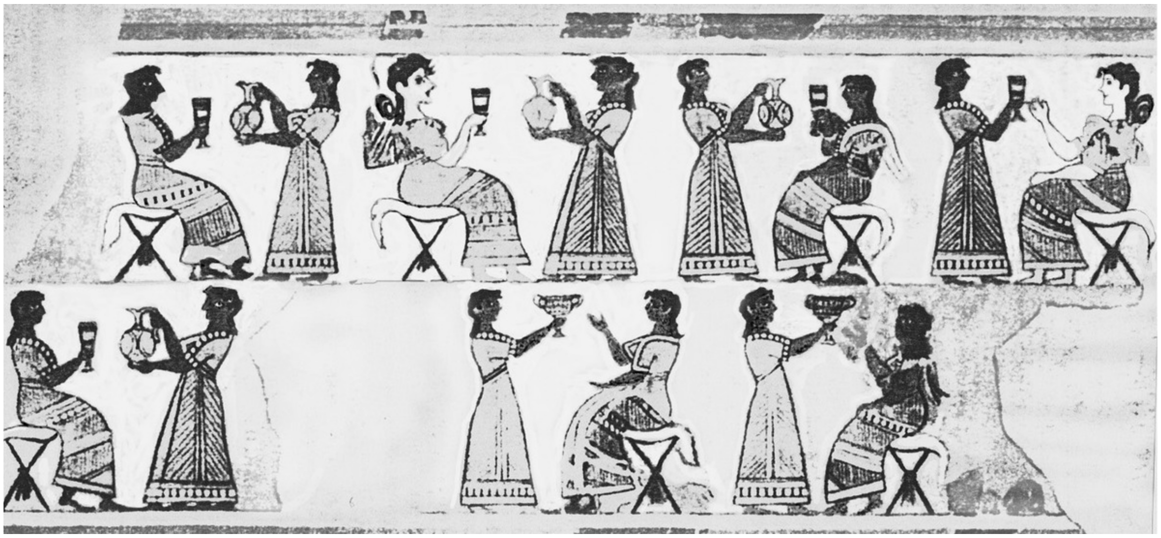

Fig. 10: Priestesses at a drinking ceremony together with guests of honor, served by attendants. So-called “Campstool Fresco” from Knossos (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann)

The Cretan burial rites and large communal graves provide further archaeological evidence of the community. The round tombs, called “tholos,” were collective tombs, one for each clan, and the large squares in front of their magnificent entrances also indicate eating and drinking ceremonies that were held for the ancestors. Very often groups of two or three tholos tombs were joined together, as an indication of clan associations on whose enduring alliances the larger initiatives of Minoan society were based.[74] The seals found in the graves ←391 | 392→ were shared by the clans from such a group, which clearly shows that seals do not stand for “private ownership.”[75]

For the matriarchy hypothesis, the decisive issue now becomes how these clans were organized: along patriarchal or matriarchal lines? In the coastal cities of West Asia, women held high positions as priestesses and administrators of the agricultural economy, and a democratic form of politics developed. However, the clans were organized in patriarchal lines, the wealth obtained from maritime trade remained in the hands of men, and women were excluded from politics—which, in spite of having matriarchal elements, no longer constitutes a matriarchal society.[76]

Matrilocality (residence with the maternal clan) in Minoan Crete is first and foremost evidenced by the large houses. It has been proven that matrilocal societies have considerably larger buildings than patrilocal societies: they have clan houses instead of family houses.[77] On Crete, houses with a length of 60 m were common. Even larger houses were built in Palaikastro in eastern Crete during the New Palace period; with an average length of 215 m, these were blocks of clan houses, which points to clan alliances. This contradicts the earlier view that there were patriarchal nuclear families in Crete, at the latest during this epoch. Large quantities of drinking vessels have been found in some of these buildings, suggesting that drinking ceremonies were also held in residential buildings, which probably served to consolidate relations within the individual clan alliances.[78]

Logically, matrilocality presupposes matrilinearity, and ancient authors provide additional clear evidence of this. Regarding the Lycians on the coast of Asia Minor, Herodotus said that they had come from Crete and generally had the mother-line, social status being inherited solely through the mother.[79] Nicolaus Damascenus documented the sole right of inheritance of daughters with ←392 | 393→the Lycians, while Heraclides Ponticus noted that they had no written rules but common law, and that they “have been ruled by women since time immemorial.”[80] This last remark is typical of patriarchal Greeks—and other men—when they come across matriarchal peoples! The above-mentioned authors speak of the “Lycians,” although these were Cretans who had settled on the coast of Asia Minor as a community of merchants and seafarers. It can be concluded from this that the same patterns were also valid in the country of their origin, Minoan Crete. Other ancient authors report that the Cretans did not call their island “patris,” that is “fatherland,” but “mētris,” which means “motherland,” even emphasizing it via the term “dear motherland.” This confirms the matrilineal descent, as the birth country of the primordial mother, the ancestress, is logically the “motherland.” In Cretan settlements abroad, their cities were called “mētro-polis,” that is “mother city,” a term still used today without people realizing its true meaning.[81]

And not only the Cretans, but many peoples in the Aegean region of that time were still based on matrilinearity and had other matriarchal elements.[82] Likewise, the Law Code of Gortyn (Crete), which was only written down later, points to matrilinearity because it emphasizes the great importance of the woman's brother in bringing up her children. The close bond between the mother's brother and the sister's children (avunculate) is always based on matrilinearity. Furthermore, it was relatively easy for women to divorce, as they were not accountable for maintaining the father-line: a woman's children always belonged to her mother clan.[83]

The Law Code of Gortyn also shows that women predominantly owned the land where, according to Neolithic tradition, they carried out the most important activities, cultivating the gardens and fields.[84] Here, "possession" cannot be understood in our sense of "property," as neither private nor clan property of the land existed, but only the right to use land. This can be seen from the fact that there were no field boundaries or fences, nor any difference in material goods that would coincide with natural boundaries, such as rivers or mountains, suggesting delimited territories.[85] Since there were no territorial claims, it was not necessary to defend land property. Women acted as "keepers of the land"—as was customary ←393 | 394→in matriarchal societies—and this duty was passed on from mother to daughter. Hence, in the domestic sphere, it was the clan mothers who gave the food and also led the rituals at feasts, just as the priestesses did in the temple palaces.[86] This was true in all epochs of the Minoan culture and even later under Mycenaean rule.

This proves that matrilinearity and matrilocality formed the structural basis of the clans in Crete. In contrast to families with patrilinearity and patrilocality, where women are oppressed, they guarantee gender equality, which can be recognized in the politics of consensus where everyone, men and women, is involved. Moreover, gender equality is evident by the two different spheres of activities: men in construction, seafaring and maritime trade, and women in the agrarian economy, clan life and religion. In a matriarchal society, male and female spheres of action are equivalent and complementary, and these spheres are mutually respected—as supported by the archaeological finds for ancient Crete.

It is evident that such a society does not provide a platform for individual men to build up a power base. Politics were community-based and aimed at integrated, collective action. A vain search was therefore undertaken for a "ruler" over Minoan society in the sense of a powerful god-king, similar to that in late West Asia. There is no pictorial evidence of "Big Men," that is, no monarchs showing defeated people bound and tied, or priests from high pedestals controlling ceremonies. As a result, the other extreme was also claimed, namely that there was no representative function for men at all, as it was impossible to imagine a public role for men other than a position of power. Neither hypothesis can be sustained. There was such a function: not in politics, where it was superfluous, but in religion. The male side of the Minoan world was respected and represented in the figure of the Sacred King or "Hero" (Greek: "Heros") who had no political power. He was considered as the representative of humans in relation to the goddess as eternal nature. As in the early theacracies of West Asia, his duties were sacral and related especially to the Sacred Marriage. In ceremonies he also embodied the young god of vegetation, a deity who died and returned every year, such as the mortal Cretan "Zeus," who was reborn every year by Rhea in the Dikteon Cave,[87] or Iakchos-Dionysus as Demeter's divine child, or the Cretan ←394 | 395→spring flower heroes, Narcissus and Hyacinth. In this religious role his function was to mediate between the city goddess, represented by the First Priestess, and the people.[88] Presumably every Minoan city and villa had its own First Priestess and Sacred King, which means there were several of them in the diverse regions.

←396 | 397→This religious function performed by men is supported by some Minoan pictorial evidence, albeit often underestimated because the figure of the Sacred King looks so unpretentious: a young man, dressed only in a loincloth like all young men, without any symbols of power or other pomp. He was therefore mistakenly identified as a "Prince." On a signet ring from Knossos, the goddess can be seen standing on a mountain, flanked by two lionesses, with a staff in her hand, handing it over with an explicit gesture to the young man standing respectfully in front of her (Fig. 11 a). This staff has been wrongly called a “commanding staff” or even “scepter” based on the symbols of patriarchal kingship. Such staffs had already been found in the earliest West Asia Neolithic period, which is why the idea of “leading men” was immediately propagandized. However, these staffs have noteworthy incisions that suggest counting, and they probably represent a calendar system of lunar cycles. In the hands of a man who could read it, such a staff had more of a ritual function than one of political power.[89] That is why we call it “moon staff,” according to the old rebirth religion with the moon as its central symbol. The name “Mīnos” is in line with this, as it is not an individual name but a title held by all Minoan Sacred Kings. It corresponds to the ancient Egyptian royal title of “Mēnes” in the meaning of “moon” (Greek: “mēnē”), or “moon phase,” “moon period.” Since Palaeolithic times, women had identified these lunar periods as “mēnstruation,” their inner fertility cycle, which was considered sacred.[90] They invented the lunar calendar and passed on this temporal order to the men, just as can be seen in this picture, with the goddess handing the moon-staff to the young Sacred King, thus introducing him to the sacred knowledge of the religion of rebirth.—Another signet ring from Mycenae clearly shows her teaching him (Fig. 11 b). The goddess is sitting on a mountain, indicated by rocks behind her, and is in lively conversation with the Sacred King. He now bears ←395 | 396→the moon staff in her name and is learning from her how to use it wisely.—A third image of the youthful Sacred King can be seen on a beautiful steatite cup from Hagia Triada, the so-called “Prince’s Cup.” Here he is displaying the long moon staff, demonstrating his religious mission to the people, represented by a young man standing in front of him (Fig. 11 c). The latter bears religious insignia in both hands, which he is going to hand to the elected king: a ceremonial sword and ritual whip, of the kind used by shepherds.[91] The king thus becomes the “shepherd of the people.” The back of the cup depicts men carrying three bull hides, the sacred sacrificial animal, a gift to the young king at his initiation ceremony.[92] Another extraordinarily beautiful painting of the Sacred King could be the so-called “Lily ←397 | 398→Prince” on a famous mural in Knossos.[93]—The last figure in this series (Fig. 11 d) is not Minoan, but dates from a later time. We will come back to this later.

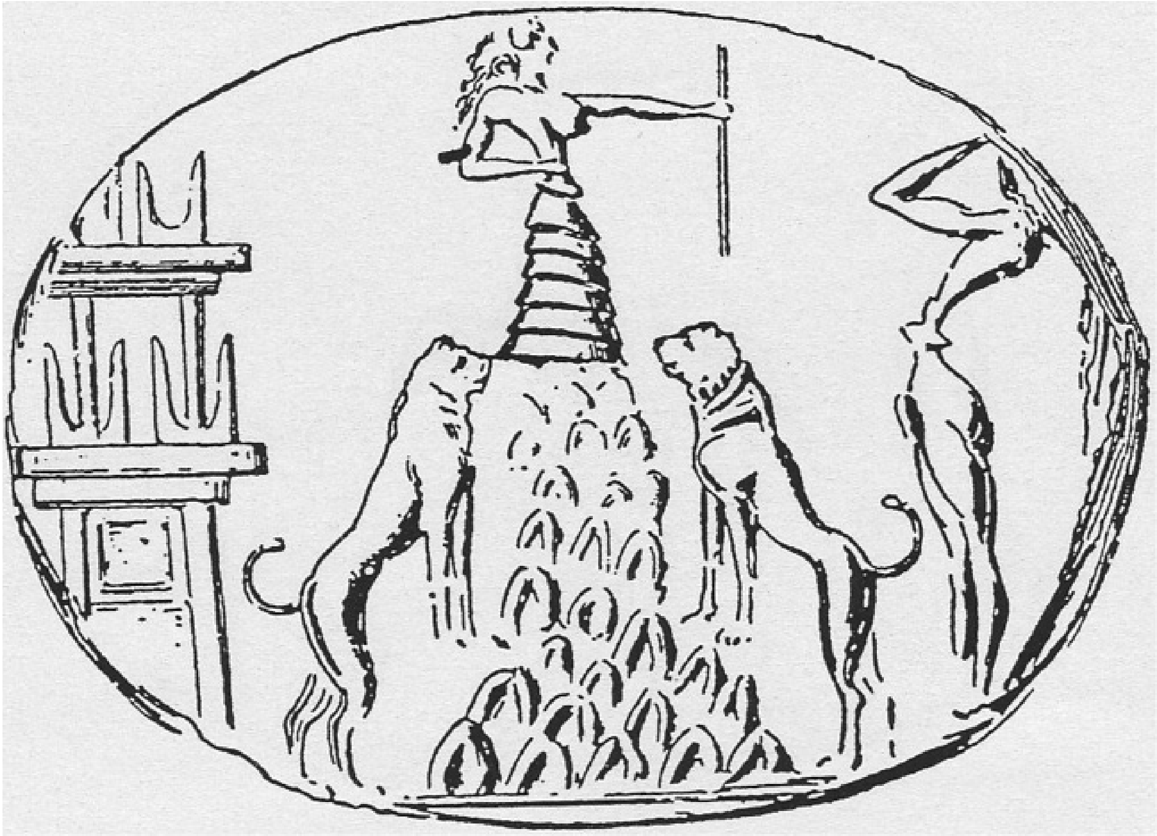

Fig. 11a: Goddess on a mountain, flanked by lionesses, handing over a staff to a young man. Seal-ring from Knossos

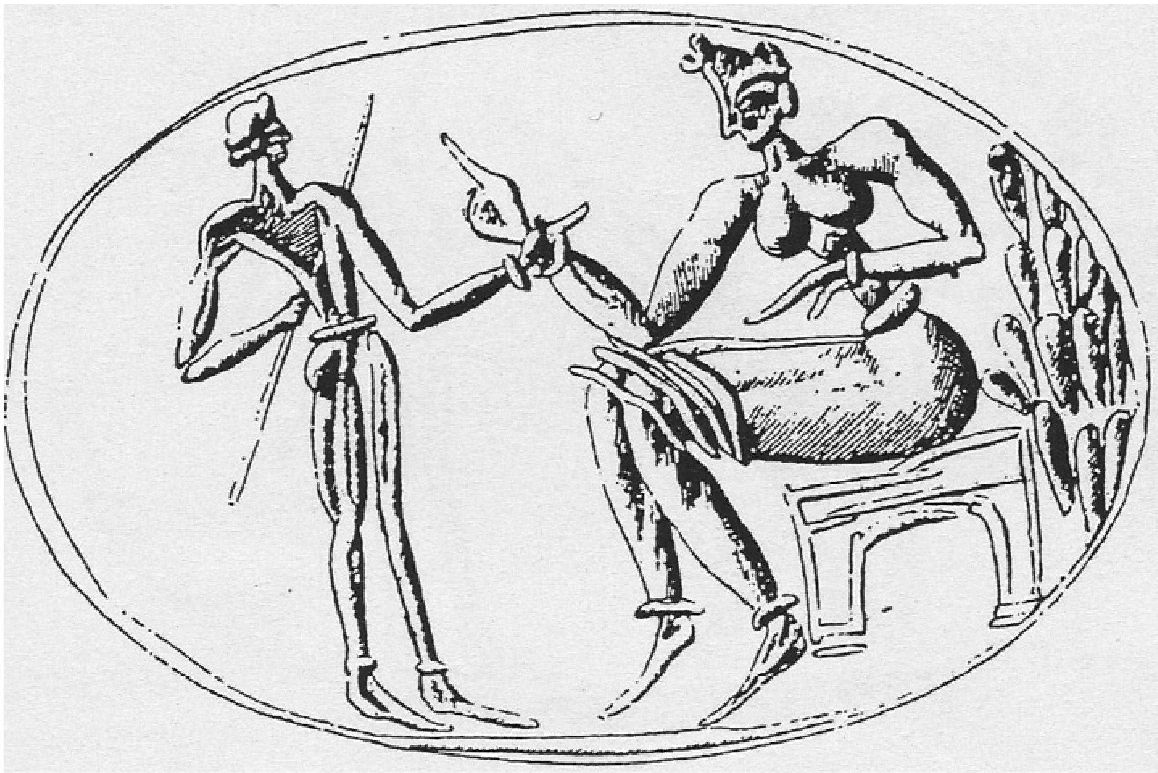

Fig. 11b: Goddess on a seat teaching the young man who now bears the staff. Seal-ring from Mycenae (Greece)

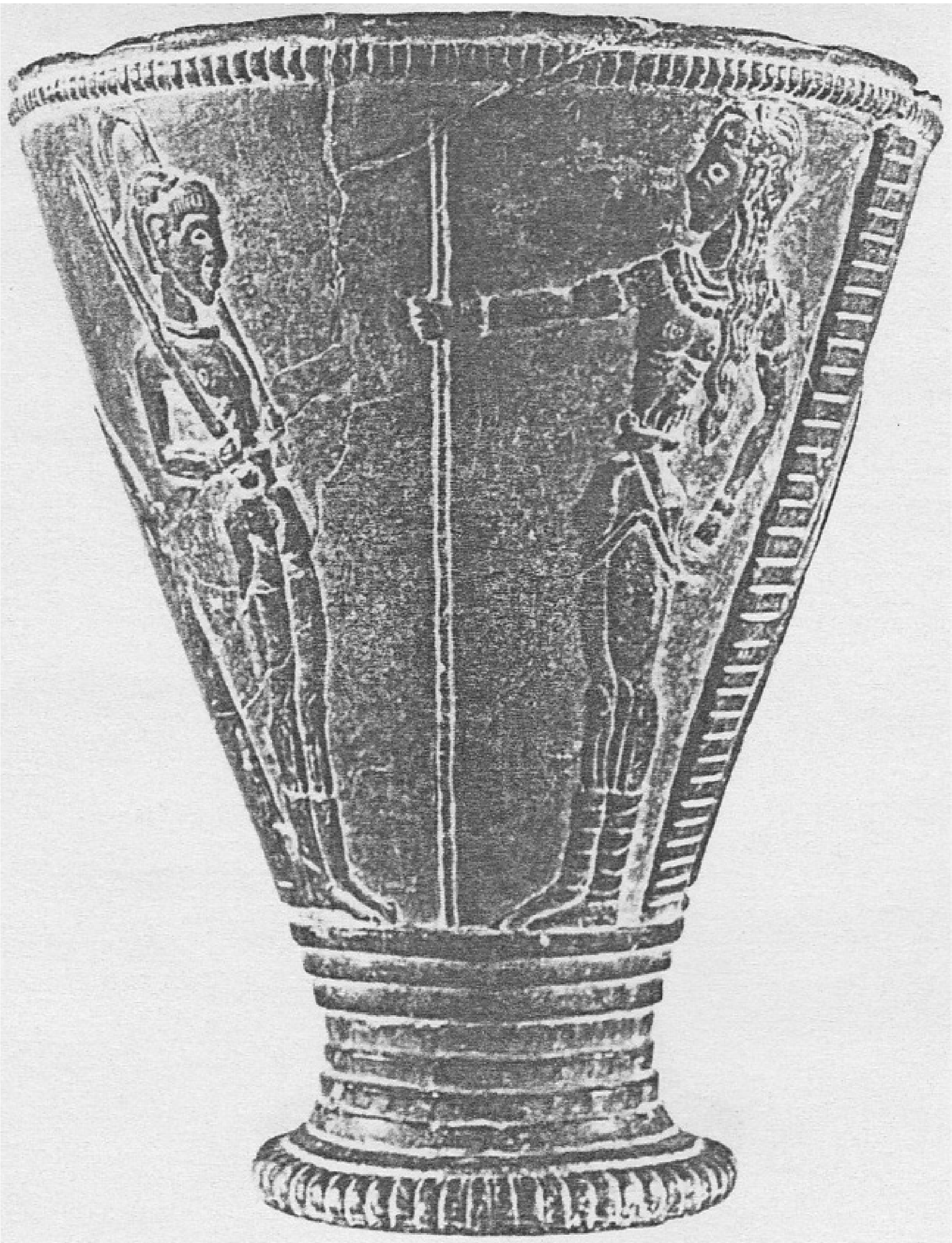

Fig. 11c: The young man displaying the staff; a young man standing in front of him, bearing the royal insignia of the former. So-called “Prince’s Cup” from Hagia Triada (Minoan Crete)

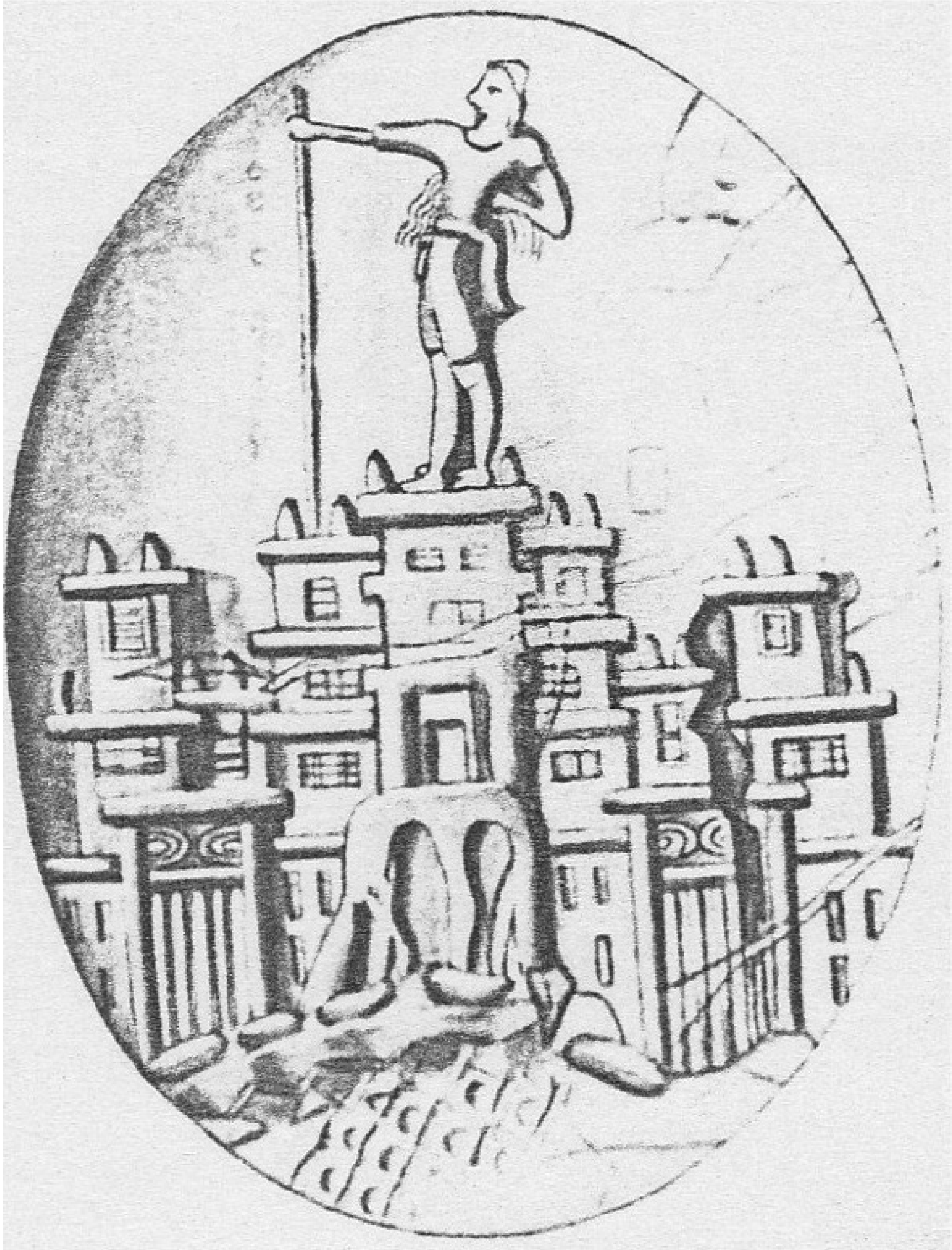

Fig. 11d: Ruler with the staff standing on top of a Minoan city. Stamp of a seal from Chania (Crete) (11 a-d in: Y.V. Andreyev, *From Eurasia to Europe*, 147, 152, 153)

The later epochs of Minoan culture (Old and New Palace periods) thus represent a *late matriarchal society*, characterized by gender equality and a social order that is still free from domination because it is based on collective consensus. Special high ranks exist, such as the First Priestess and Sacred King, and it is therefore a ranked society. But these ranks mean neither power nor domination; such persons are elected as religious representatives. In this way, Minoan society maintained its matriarchal roots throughout its epochs, showing to what brilliant cultural heights a matriarchal society can develop when left undisturbed. After the downfall of the great Danube civilizations, this was the last matriarchal high culture in Europe which, thanks to its protected insular location, was able to outlast the patriarchalization of large parts of the continent for a long time.

Mycenae and Sparta: War as the Measure of Everything

The fall of Minoan culture from the year 1,450 onwards happened in an extraordinary way. It was the eruption of the volcano on the island of Thera (Santorini), which initiated its destruction; Thera is only 150 km north of Crete.[94] The first, weaker eruption prompted the inhabitants of Akrotiri (Thera) to leave their homes, attempting to flee across the sea and crowding together at the harbor. The second, extremely violent eruption, lasting 71 days, began with a blazing fire-cloud that came hurtling down from the summit, followed by showers of ash that suffocated the crowd at the harbor and buried the whole island.[95] The last eruption was the most dramatic, with the volcano blowing up the island completely which sank into the sea so that, today, all that can be seen are the remains of the rim of the crater. The human settlements were thrown into the water, and the former town of Akrotiri now lies on the sea bed, except for a few homes.

←398 | 399→

Some volcanologists have reconstructed Thera’s eruption and compared it to the eruption of Krakatoa near Sumatra, the worst in recent history (1883). Krakatoa Island was also torn apart, and the noise could be heard for three thousand miles. As the volcano collapsed, it caused a tsunami (a huge tidal wave) and tens of thousands of people on the surrounding coasts lost their lives. These volcanologists estimate Thera’s eruption to have been twice as violent as the one of Krakatoa, because the collapse of the volcano left behind a huge caldera, now filled with seawater, which is four times larger than that of the Krakatoa. The tsunamis must have also been considerably more violent.

The neighboring island of Crete was directly affected by this disaster. First the Minoan cities collapsed due to a series of violent earthquakes, then the Cretan north coast was devastated by tsunamis of an estimated 60 m height and the Minoan fleet was completely smashed. Knossos was located a little further inland, so the tsunamis did not reach it, but the survivors were helpless without the port and fleet. The effects of this large-scale disaster reached far beyond Crete, affecting the entire Aegean region. The tsunamis also had a huge impact and destroyed the Greek and Asian Minor coastline; they flooded the Levant and North Africa including the Nile delta, devastating the ports and parts of the cities there. Enormous clouds of gas, smoke and dust darkened Crete, the Peloponnese and western Asia Minor, followed by heavy rainfall and thunderstorms, and finally the “volcanic winter” arrived with a huge drop in temperature due to the sun being obscured.[96] Records in Egypt from the 18th Dynasty tell of “nine days of darkness, the terrible noise made by the earth, destroyed cities and devastation in North Egypt, blood and epidemics throughout the country. No-one arrived from the land of Crete; no-one could sail to Byblos to fetch wood.”[97] In other words, sea traffic collapsed throughout the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

After a few decades, when the worst effects of the catastrophe had subsided, the time came in the Aegean for the foreign, Indo-European tribes. They had penetrated mainland Greece as far as the Peloponnese, destroying the local cultures, subjugating the native population and settling there. However, they had great respect for the powerful influence of the Minoan culture, so they did not ←399 | 400→dare to attack the Minoan settlements in Greece. This culture had also been their teacher: they copied Minoan marine know-how and built ships with keels, becoming seafarers themselves, especially pirates. They regarded ships as the “horses of Poseidon,” their sea god, and with them they continued their habitual mentality of predation at sea. When, in 1,450, the Minoan culture collapsed and never recovered, these early Greeks (Achaeans) conquered the island of Crete. There they appointed an autocratic king, the “tyrant,” whom one had never found there before (Post-Palace phase, from 1,400). A seal imprint from Chania shows this “Big Man” standing proudly and completely oversized on the roofs of a conquered Cretan city, now using the former moon staff in a ruling gesture like a “scepter” (see Fig. 11 d). The seal was probably produced at his command, being an imitation of the earlier, elegant artifacts from Minoan culture, but “non-Minoan” in both its content and clumsy fabrication. The early Greek Achaeans were able to conquer, but they lacked culture and administrative experience, could not read or write and had to employ Minoan scribes, even though the latter had a different language.

In Greece they now developed their own palace culture, taking advantage of Cretan architects, metalsmiths and craftsmen who were deported from the island to the mainland. In that way, the first Greek culture, the Mycenaean culture, whose masters were the Achaeans, developed in Argolis (see Map 10). The Mycenaean culture, however, did not possess the beautiful, open temple palaces of Crete with their magnificent portico gates, but replaced these with fortresses surrounded by “cyclopean” walls of massive stone blocks, reflecting the drastic change in mentality.[98] Moreover, such strongholds no longer had any areas for ritual dances, but an inner great hall (“megaron”), which was furnished with Cretan art. But the paintings of graceful, priestly women were now replaced with representations of warriors, as the focus was, in general, military. A patriarchal social order and religion prevailed, except for some matrilocal remnants among the upper class, preserved by marriage to important native women.[99] The Achaeans also took the weapon of the chariot from the West Asian cultures, so from their massively fortified strongholds they were now well-equipped to fight for maritime trade. However, they were less concerned with trade than with looting, for a continual wave of warfare, in the true sense of the word, now assaulted the

Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, driven by the Achaeans. The famous city of ←400 | 401→Troy in Asia Minor was the first to fall victim to them.[100] Afterwards they occupied the cities of Miletus, Iasos, Halicarnassus and Ephesus on the west coast of Asia Minor, establishing a loose union of cities whose head was the king of Mycenae (in Hittite: territory of the "Ahhiyawa") (see Map 10). Many Achaeans also served as mercenaries in the armies of the Hittites and the Egyptians, the Great Powers of that time, which were fighting over the Levant; Achaeans represented a large proportion of their military force. However, they would switch alliances and sides, depending on where they thought they had the best advantage. These mercenary armies, consisting of different Indo-European troops of warriors, soon took the initiative to become independent and attacked their former masters, the Hittite Empire and also North Egypt, resulting in severe devastation. They became the "Terror of the Mediterranean" and entered history as the so-called "Sea Peoples." They caused instability as pirates and conquerors in the entire eastern Mediterranean and even threatened the balance between the Great Powers of the time.[101] In this way, during the late Bronze Age (1,400–1,100), the Achaean-Mycenaean civilization replaced the Cretan-Minoan culture throughout the Aegean.

However, it was not long before the conquerors were conquered in turn. After just three centuries of raids and sieges of cities overseas, along with dynastic feuds and civil wars in Greece itself, the Mycenaean civilization was shattered and weakened. It could no longer withstand fresh attacks from northern nomadic tribes, and a massive invasion by Indo-European mounted warriors, the Dorians, overran Greece's Bronze Age cities. Although they were culturally primitive, the invaders possessed new weapons made of iron, thus beginning the Iron Age in South Europe (1,100). They depopulated the land by killing en masse, destroying the Mycenaean castle-palaces and burning them to the ground, leaving only the rubble.[102] Many Mycenaeans fled and regrouped, first on the Attica peninsula and the large island of Euboea, which the conquerors passed by (see Map 10). Conditions were catastrophic in other parts of the country, agriculture perished and the remaining peasant population starved to death. Less than a quarter survived in the end, and some areas were completely depopulated. The Dorians ←401 | 402→continued to live off cattle breeding with large herds, although dry, hilly Greece, wedged between the mountains and the sea, was entirely unsuitable for this. The green vegetation was eradicated down to the stony ground, and whole areas of land became deserted. As a consequence, fierce fights erupted over the remaining grazing land, causing the Dorian invaders to break up into tribes and groups warring against each other. The result was a drastic decline of any culture leading to Greece's "Dark Age."[103] During the three to four centuries this lasted, civilization died out here: stone architecture disappeared, and people lived in primitive huts of clay and wood. Their tools were made of flint, bone and horn instead of metal, for they had completely forgotten the metalworking skills the Dorians had possessed when they invaded. Their clothing consisted of uncut, unstitched cloth and was therefore simpler than the carefully sewn clothing of the Palaeolithic epoch. Burials were limited to fleetingly excavated, tiny box graves. Trade and writing no longer existed; the people were and remained illiterate. Therefore, many descendants of the former conquerors also perished because the matriarchal agrarian cultures, from which they could have learned, had died out here.[104] This meant the worst cultural regression ever in the history of Europe.

Only centuries later did agriculture return, but in a different form ("Archaic period"). As typical Dorians, the Spartans had settled in village groups in Laconia, the southernmost plain on the Peloponnese peninsula (see Map 10). Their cultural level remaining low, they did not build cities, could neither read nor write, and their knowledge of languages was limited. However, they had been clever enough not to destroy the subjugated population ("Helots") entirely, but enslaved those who remained and used them for carrying out agriculture. Basically, like all Greeks, they despised working in agriculture and crafts. The only exception was the armory, because Spartans were exclusively devoted to the art of warfare, which they practiced to excess. The need for this arose out of the Spartans being significantly outnumbered by the people they had subjugated. As a result, they had to use systematic violence to dominate their slaves and force them to work—that’s how the Spartan state functioned.

War dominated the Spartan state in all aspects of life. To be able to train continuously for war, the men lived at the barracks of their military regiments and not with their families. This was also where politics was made, by assemblies made up exclusively of warriors, in which approval was expressed by feet stamping and shouting, the loudest being the winners. However, it was actually ←402 | 403→the warlords, the “Spartiakes,” who kept everything under military control and made up a Dorian warrior aristocracy in spite of the ideal of equality that was propagandized. In particular, this ideal of equality did not apply to women in Sparta. How Spartans waged war now differed from the time of their earlier invasion in open groups of mounted nomads. Horses and cavalry were of little use on the narrow plain of Sparta located between mountains that were difficult to access. Instead, they developed the infamous Greek phalanx, a human war machine made up of rows of heavily armed infantry. With this they now began a systematic campaign of conquest against their neighbors in the Peloponnese and ended up dominating the entire peninsula with the areas of Argolis and Messenia. Since they always defeated the weakened tribes there, they ruthlessly continued, addicted to victory, until they had conquered the whole Greek mainland up to the Thessalian Plain in the north. Nevertheless, as a land-based power they ignored the coastline.

The Spartan series of wars triggered a new exodus. Many Mycenaean people who had stayed on the eastern coast of Greece preferred not to encounter the Spartans and fled across the Aegean Sea to the coast of Asia Minor and the large islands in front of it. The Greeks settling there spoke an Ionian dialect. In Mycenaean times they had already adopted some elements of the Minoan culture and now they joined together with other Minoans in their former trading colonies in Asia Minor, the largest of these being the city of Miletus. This fusion gave the Greeks of Asia Minor, the “Ionians,” a special cultural imprint.[105] Meanwhile, the warlords from Sparta introduced patriarchal clans and patrilineal succession to the throne throughout Greece. This, however, did not prevent them from marrying the last daughters from the former Mycenaean aristocracy who, according to Minoan-Mycenaean tradition, were priestesses, and such marriages brought legitimacy and prestige to the conquerors. How this happened is told in the myths of their patriarchal god, the Olympian Zeus, who raped the cult priestesses in the old sanctuaries and forced them to recognize him as the supreme deity. He kidnapped their young male assistants for his sexual amusement, such as Ganymede, and anyone who resisted him was destroyed by his “lightning bolt.”[106]

These exceptional Mycenaean noblewomen managed to maintain a limited matrilinearity in their clans.[107] Spartan women, however, although known for ←403 | 404→their “freedom,” did not live at all according to matriarchal patterns. They represented a kind of “army of reserves” releasing the men for their fanatical obsession with war—for here, as elsewhere, the freedom of men relied on the servitude of women. Politically, Spartan women had no voice; their task was to supervise the Helots’ agricultural work in the simple, rural subsistence economy. However, the land belonged solely to the Spartan men and was inherited along the father-line, a fact that also made Spartan women into servants for the men’s property. However, according to the Greek ideal they did not work, but only supervised the enslaved Helots who worked for the ruling class. The Spartan state was therefore based on an agrarian slave economy. Supervision of this economy, however, gave women a certain degree of autonomy, since the men depended on the women to provide the daily food for their communal meals in the barracks. Perhaps this was the reason why Spartan men “respected” women, as is euphemistically said. In this way, Spartan women had an indirect political influence in civil affairs, which Spartan men did not understand at all. The classical Greek authors, especially those from Athens, whose women were much oppressed, claimed that the women in Sparta “dominated the men” and voiced their indignation about their “sexual freedom.”[108]

This “sexual freedom,” however, was based on the fact that many men died in the constant warmongering and the women were supposed to bear enough children to top up the regiments. Children were prepared for war at an early age; from the age of seven boys were sent to the regiments and girls to sports schools. Physical training was also obligatory for the girls, so they would later give birth to strong offspring. These institutions demanded discipline and absolute obedience, which was pursued with rigor. The mothers never saw their sons again, and their daughters only returned to them when they were pregnant. Newborns who did not look healthy or strong were abandoned. In spite of the importance of the father-line, it was not the father but the council of elders who decided on this matter, as children did not belong to their parents but to the state.[109]

Marriage also had to serve the state. But as husbands lived with their regiment, the spouses lived apart most of the time. The men visited their wives only for a short time overnight; it was not about love but about procreating. Sexual encounters were not just lustful or erotic, but rather a duty for men and women to produce offspring. It was also common for men to offer their wives to other brave men to provide good offspring, or for women to do so by themselves, a deliberate ←404 | 405→form of eugenic selective breeding. Emotional bonds were therefore extremely muted, and feelings of love were shifted to homosexuality, common among the men in the barracks. They held onto male lovers and also made use of the young boys. In Sparta, homosexuality was a custom employed by the warlords to stimulate male pugnacity in defense of their beloved partner who was fighting at their side in the phalanx. This situation led women to also cultivate same-sex love among themselves.[110]

In fact, the “freedom” of Spartan women was only relative, due to the men being constantly absent in the barracks or at war. Ultimately, their lives were defined by men and followed entirely the men’s logic of war, to which they were subordinated. Spartan society had very clear ideas of what was “manly” and what was “womanish,” in other words, it was based on strictly patriarchal values.

The patriarchal pantheon of the Olympian gods was also formed during the time of the Dorian Greeks. Its supreme master was Zeus, an ancient sky god. All deities who had been worshipped before were now subordinated to him in invented genealogies, the diversity of the previously local deities being forced into a hierarchical system. Thus Hera, the Great Goddess of the matriarchal, pre-Greek Pelasgians, who was considered to be the mother of gods and humans, was made into his wife and had no say. According to the myth, Zeus lured her in the guise of a cuckoo, her symbolic animal, and raped her so she had to marry him.[111] Here we see the patriarchal abuse of the Sacred Marriage, where warrior kings used the matriarchal cult priestesses by force in order to be recognized by the people through this “marry-in.” Truly a parasitic act of a “cuckoo”! Other deities were now considered “sons” and “daughters” of Zeus, such as Ares, Hermes, Apollo, Artemis, and Athena, whom Zeus claimed to have begotten in his countless sexual adventures, for now he was the supreme father and all deities were supposed to be his descendants. They had to pledge allegiance to him as vassals and female servants, and those who refused were precipitated from Olympus, like Hephaestus, son of Hera. During these transformations, the many different fields of activity of very ancient goddesses such as Hera, Aphrodite and Athena were limited to single functions. For example, Hera was now only a mother goddess, Aphrodite only a goddess of love, and Athena only a chaste warrior virgin. At the same time they were degraded, so that Hera now represented a jealous and quarrelsome wife, and Aphrodite a divine whore who slept with any god, while the goddess of war, Athena, now had to be an exponent of the patriarchal principles of Zeus and to protect his heroes.[112] This led to the total destruction of matriarchal religiosity, and the deities ended up being nothing more than the reflection of the patriarchal conditions of humans of the time.

←405 | 406→

Athens and Ionia: Maritime Trade, Money, and the Ambivalent Situation of Women

In their military state, the Dorians of Sparta developed the one variant of patriarchal life for women in ancient Greece, while the Greeks of Attica invented the other in their city-states (from 1,000 BCE). As this eastern coastal region had not been conquered by the Spartans, the activity carried out by men and the source of their virility was not war, but maritime trade. However, this was a rather slow development, as the destruction of the Achaean-Mycenaean culture had brought the early Greek maritime trade to a standstill for centuries. Again, another culture had to come to their aid so that the Greeks of Attica could relearn the skills of maritime trade; on this occasion it was the Semitic Phoenicians (Canaanites).

After the Achaean war heroes and mercenary gangs had disappeared as the "Terror of the Mediterranean," the Phoenicians took advantage of the void left. For 200 years they created a new trade network that eclipsed everything that had gone before. Again, the basis was the naval technology of the Minoans, now adopted by the Phoenicians who also had well-built ships with keels, which enabled them to sail the open sea. The Phoenicians had a huge fleet of these vessels, so they could open up Europe and North Africa to the world trade of the time. From their hometown of Tyros on the Levant, they not only crossed the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Sea and operated settlements on the large islands of Crete and Euboea, but also established trading bases in Sicily and Italy. They were in contact with Egypt and founded trading cities along the entire North African coast, including the mighty Carthage (814 BCE) (see Map 10). From here they reached the western Mediterranean with France and Spain and discovered the Atlantic coast. On behalf of Pharaoh Necho II (6th century) they even sailed around the entire continent of Africa. They were the greatest sailors and merchants of their time, and they invented the first phonetic alphabet.[113]

←406 | 407→Out of envy and a sense of competition, the Greeks, and later the Romans, used to conceal these deeds, and belittle Phoenician culture. However, the Greeks of Attica and Euboea copied everything from the Phoenicians: they learned how to lay out ports, how to build seaworthy merchant ships, how to load and unload them efficiently, as well as how to construct warships for protection against piracy. They copied the organization of factories producing goods for maritime trade and adopted the Phoenician system of weights and measures, as well as the phonetic alphabet. They followed the Phoenicians on their routes into the eastern Mediterranean and to coastal cities in the Levant that were unknown to them, as well as to Sicily and Italy, where they established trading bases like those of the Phoenicians. The western Greek cities of Italy developed out of this, in turn also serving to reduce population pressure in the narrow homeland. But the further they ventured into the wake of the Phoenicians, the more they came into competition with them.[114]

From the 8th century onwards, Greek trading activity intensified, and the Athenians in particular realized increasingly what it was all about: the pursuit of wealth, which was now more easily obtained by trade than by robbery. In addition to the old feudal order of aristocrats and farmers, a new class of merchants, traders and bankers emerged, all of them competing for gold. They knew how to obtain wealth, through individual initiative and ambitious ventures at sea, especially by trading goods that were bought cheaply and then sold at a high price, resulting in an accumulation of gold and silver in the hands of the merchants. Unlike the maritime trade of matriarchal Minoan Crete, which was based on an economy of distribution and giving, they no longer shared their profits with the community. Soon, a coinage system with minted money was established, bringing with it a money economy that flourished on the markets of the Greek trading cities in the Aegean and in Italy. Everything was now measured in monetary value, so it could be counted and cheated on; in other words, given back with unequal compensation. This was how “capital” emerged and, with it, the banking and interest system, which the Greeks also learned from the Phoenicians. The rich got richer and richer by making their money “work” for them through interest, and thus commercial capitalism came about among the upper and middle classes.

However, money cannot really be seen to be working anywhere; work is only carried out by people. Yet the Greeks of Attica, now following the ethics of profitable undertakings, did not have a work ethic, for they too had the dyed-in-the-wool Greek contempt for work. Work only took time away from commercial ←407 | 408→expeditions and trade wars! For them crafts were “unhealthy” and farm work “dirty and boring.” With money, they could make others do this work for them, such as the oppressed farmers and poorly paid craftsmen, or they could buy slaves. The slave trade began very early with the Greeks and continued throughout their history. Many of the slaves were their own countrymen who had been driven into debt and poverty, or slaves were bought from the “barbarian” countries around them. The bought women were turned into household slaves, men into slaves in the workshops.[115] In this way, the Greek society of Attica, especially in the city of Athens, in spite of its much-praised art and culture, was also a slave-holder society—not with a totalitarian administration as in late Mesopotamia, nor with a military state as in Sparta, but a slave-holder society based on a capitalistic trading economy.

How did the women of Attica fare in this version of patriarchal society? Let us consider Athenian women. Their lot was not good because, as wives of wealthy men, unlike Spartan women, they no longer had any economic function. Their duties were limited to the domestic sphere. Wives were meant to run the household, supervise servants and slaves, raise the children and remain faithful to their husbands, whom they had address to as “master,” in spite of the man’s frequent and long absences. A wife had no possessions, but lived shut up in the home and spent her free time engaged in textile handicrafts. If a woman sat at the window while doing this work, and saw a man in the street, she had to get up and go further inside the house. HhVisits were not allowed, not even from female friends, because women were considered to be “instigators of evil” when they got together. Often large dogs guarded the house and the exit. The women’s quarters, where they had to remain, were sealed with wax or locked with heavy-duty keys to prevent them from being opened from the inside. This led to the woman’s death many times when the house caught fire.[116]

Women were clothed from head to toe—in contrast to the Spartan women who trained completely naked in the sports schools. But an Athenian woman was definitely not allowed to go out in public, as every walk was considered an attempt to find a lover, every purchase an opportunity to get poison to kill the husband. When going out was nevertheless indispensable, she was only allowed to do so accompanied by a “women’s supervisor” so that she would not indulge in “debauchery” in the city. A wife could not transact any business, not even go to court on her own behalf, where she had to be represented by a male relative ←408 | 409→or legal guardian to whom she was subordinated her entire life. She received no education whatsoever, for women had no intellect and no virtue in the eyes of their husbands anyway. A wife only saw her husband in the bedroom; he did not even dine with her, but only with the men at his club. Her only real function for the husband was to bear his legitimate sons, who were to inherit the father’s civil rights and wealth. This was considered her “biological destiny”—showing that motherhood was exploited here as elsewhere in patriarchy. A woman was not even considered to be a real human being, but some kind of imperfect organism, which is what the Greek word “gyne” implies, meaning “womb.” By possessing a woman, a man therefore appropriated this organ which he lacked in order to reproduce his own male sex.[117]

Meanwhile, the aristocratic and newly rich husbands in Athens led a completely different life, entertaining themselves with drinking bouts, prostitutes, and beautiful boys. They especially enjoyed amusing themselves with hetaera, who were not ordinary prostitutes but aristocratic women, highly educated in all intellectual fields, and mastering poetry, music, and dance. They were invited to the “symposia,” Greek banquets, where they would perform eloquently, and indulge in drunkenness and wild sex orgies together with the men. They were very popular with the rich, who called them “companions” and paid large sums for their services. However, they were stigmatized, too, for they could not become wives under any circumstances, but had to survive independently.[118] The neglected wives, on the other hand, did not enjoy any sexual freedom, so envy, jealousy, malicious gossip flourished among them, as well as intrigue which could be subtly arranged through the servants. Such behavior can easily occur when women live in a suppressed situation. As a result, widespread dishonesty and double moral standards between the sexes reigned, their relationships were tense to neurotic, and philosophers preached moral sermons against women, for the most part in the marketplaces as their public stage, regularly condemning the “freedom” of Spartan women.[119]

In the Ionian trading cities on the coast of Asia Minor, the situation for women was better than for the Athenian women in Attica, as elements of the ←409 | 410→Minoan-Mycenaean tradition still had an effect. In addition, interchange with other advanced civilizations of West Asia helped a unique intellectualism to flourish. Most of the great philosophers and scholars of the time came from Ionia (see Map 10).[120] The rich women in the upper class were able to participate in education, attending philosophical schools, and even becoming scholars themselves. All famous Greek women of antiquity came from the Ionian cities on the coast of Asia Minor, and the large islands off the coast; they were women writers and poets such as Sappho, intellectuals such as Aspasia, and philosophers such as Theano, and as priestesses they still led religious festivals.[121] When they later had to flee to the Greek mainland because of the Persian conquest of Asia Minor (mid-6th century), they were welcomed in Corinth and Syracuse, where they built famous goddess temples. But they were a thorn in the side of the Athenian men, aristocrats and citizens alike. For their wives were enthusiastic about the learned women of Ionia and started to demand a philosophical education for their daughters, causing severe displeasure among their husbands. In spite of the resistance, the famous Ionian women left a huge legacy, which had impact on the Hellenistic epoch (from the end of the 4th century BCE). Women started to emerge as scholars, mathematicians, doctors, and philosophers alongside men.[122] At that time, the centers of Hellenism were Alexandria in Egypt, Pergamon in Asia Minor, the island of Rhodes, and Athens in Greece.

This development continued for centuries beyond the year zero. At the end of the Hellenistic period lived Hypatia (355–415 CE), the most famous scientist of her time. She was a polymath and director of the

Library of Alexandria on the Egyptian coast, the largest archive of knowledge of the epoch.[123] Her professorship was brutally ended by a new power that was emerging at that time, Christianity. Under the protection of their bishop, fanatical monks seized and murdered her in the church of Kaisarion, where they stripped Hypatia naked and cut her into pieces while she was still alive. They then set fire to the Library of Alexandria.[124] In this way, they set a beacon for a new era, supported by the ←410 | 411→politics of the time, in which Christianity, which had begun as an egalitarian “Jesus movement,” but increasingly developed patriarchal, became the enemy of science and silenced women in Europe for almost two millennia. –

The Etruscans: Joy of Life in This World and the Otherworld

Just as the Minoans and later the Phoenicians were the teachers of the Greeks, the Etruscans were those of the Romans. Their origin is disputed, although many indications point to their home being in the Aegean region, on the coast of Asia Minor. The Aegean Sea, with its coastline and islands, was long under the heavy influence of the Minoan culture of Crete, something which can still be recognized in the Etruscan culture. The Minoan cultural epoch had long-lasting, indirect consequences in the Mediterranean region, a situation that is considerably underestimated by research.

A linguistic affinity has been found between Etruscan and Lemnian from the island of Lemnos (Aegean Sea), both ancient, pre-Indo-European Mediterranean languages spoken prior to the immigration of Indo-Europeans.[125] Ancient Greek contains loan words from Etruscan, dating from a time when neither Greeks nor early Etruscans had settled in Italy. At the time, both groups maintained animated trade relations on the Greek island of Euboea.[126] This suggests the ancestors of the Italian Etruscans originated from the Aegean cultural area. The ancient author Herodotus also reports that the early Etruscans were said to have coexisted in communities with the Lydians on the coast of Asia Minor, which means they had close contact with the neighboring Lycians who were Minoans. However, this partnership with the Lydians was contested, as the Lydians were patriarchal Indo-Europeans and had neither language or customs, nor deities in common with the Etruscans (Dionysius of Halicarnassus). This does not mean that the Etruscans did not originate from there, as Herodotus might have confused the Lydians with the Lycians. In fact, linguistic references confirm that Etruscan-Lycian contacts were easily established since both peoples had a similar social order.[127] Besides the linguistic evidence, some cultural customs and goods are also shared by Minoans and Etruscans, such as religious processions and the use of masks in ceremonies, as well as the seven-stringed lyre (“lyra”) and the ←411 | 412→double flute (“aulos”) used in religious rites, characteristics of both cultures that were later adopted by the Greeks and even later by the Romans. Additionally, the long, spiral-twisted staff carried by the Etruscan priests and their art of reading oracles from the entrails of sacrificial animals come from the cultures of West Asia.[128] These Etruscan traditions were completely unknown to the neighboring Italic peoples where Etruscans later settled.

The Aegean origin of the Etruscans is also indicated by their ironworking skills, for this was known much earlier in Asia Minor (from 1,400 BCE) and was much more developed than in Italy, where it only began from the 1st millennium BCE onwards. In the new Etruscan habitat there were rich iron ore deposits, which they knew how to use expertly. They did not primarily create weapons from the iron, but innovative and artistic objects, and others made of bronze and gold. From the 8th century onwards, they engaged in a flourishing trade with such objects, first west of Italy in the “Tyrrhenian Sea,” named after them because they called themselves “Tyrrhenians” (see Map 10). Soon, however, they also sailed the central and western Mediterranean, eventually placing them in competition with the Phoenicians in Carthage, as well as with the western Greeks who owned trading cities in Sicily and South Italy.[129]

What had induced Etruscan men and women to move away from their homeland on the Aegean Sea? According to Herodotus, groups of local peoples were forced to emigrate due to famine. However, famine was most likely a result of the constant warlike aggression of the Achaeans in Asia Minor, and possibly the war was the direct cause of their emigration.[130] In any case, at the beginning of the 1st millennium Etruscan groups arrived both on the island of Lemnos and on the coast of Central Italy, and with them a high culture began to develop all of a sudden. Its level was strikingly high compared to the culturally poor local Italic tribes in the region.[131] The Etruscans did not come as conquerors and did not wage war, but they settled first on the coast, which was not inhabited by the local tribes, who lived in thatched huts in the mountainous, water-rich interior, ←412 | 413→which they farmed. At that time Rome, the so-called "eternal city," was also only a village of such huts. The first Romans had arrived in Italy a millennium earlier with other Indo-European immigrants, settling on the Tiber. There they started to earn their famous reputation by abducting and raping the wives of their neighbors to resolve, as all-male groups, their problem of not having offspring.[132] When the Etruscans arrived, their high culture was so attractive to the Italic tribes that many left their settlements on the hilltops and joined the newcomers and their vast trading network on the coast.[133] Even the Romans, who did not have to move since they lived near the sea anyway, were drawn under Etruscan influence.

The Etruscans now founded numerous cities together with the native tribes, and so their culture spread rapidly. Initially, they settled in Tuscany and Umbria, later extending further south towards Latium and Campania, further north to the Po lowlands and west to Corsica (see Map 10). They were excellent urban planners and builders, as well as experts in irrigation and drainage, so that Etruscan engineers were often called in to help other peoples. From the 6th century onwards, they had transformed Etruria into a flourishing cultural landscape and built up dozens of towns, some of them by the sea and many others on the hilltops with far-reaching lines of sight. Early Rome also inherited its urban structure from the Etruscans. The towns were politically independent city states, the twelve most important ones being united within a religious confederation to maintain internal peace.[134] The Etruscans never wanted a central government and therefore never formed one. During a special phase of their culture, there was a kingship, together with important clan leaders and rich merchants, with each city having such a political structure. Whether this led to a strictly hierarchical society with “elites” and “dependents,” however, is called in question as, at the same time, there were also highly respected priests and priestesses, officials, architects, engineers, specialists in the art of forging, and the equally respected female specialists in the art of ceramics and textile production.[135] Above all, the rich did not hoard their wealth privately, but spent it on the community, investing in their city, having pavements, sewer systems and harbor basins built.[136]

←413 | 414→This approach was based on the values of sharing, reciprocity, and balance, precisely matriarchal values, which still characterized Etruscan culture. It can be seen in the funeral architecture at the extensive tomb complexes: they are not individual graves, but were laid out as community graves for whole clans, which could be more or less prosperous. The grave structures do not reflect any hierarchy of the sexes either, but contain men and women in equal proportions and with the same grave goods. This shows that an egalitarian clan system existed, with individual marriages embedded within it, as the basic social order of the cities.[137]

The Etruscans developed an outstanding burial architecture. Grave structures consisted of artificial mounds with several sepulchers buried deep in their ground, reached by stairways going down. Or they were carved into rock walls in a system of widely branched caves with columns in the interior, sometimes elaborated as underground buildings. The tombs imitate the homes of the living with walls and rafters inside, sometimes even magnificent furnishings carved in stone (Fig. 12). Occasionally, they were even decorated with temple-like facades and friezes with figures. Many tomb buildings were also grouped together to form necropolises or “cities of the deceased” in the literal sense of the word, occupying considerable areas.[138] This indicates the Etruscans’ great love and respect for the deceased and a rich cult for their female and male ancestors.

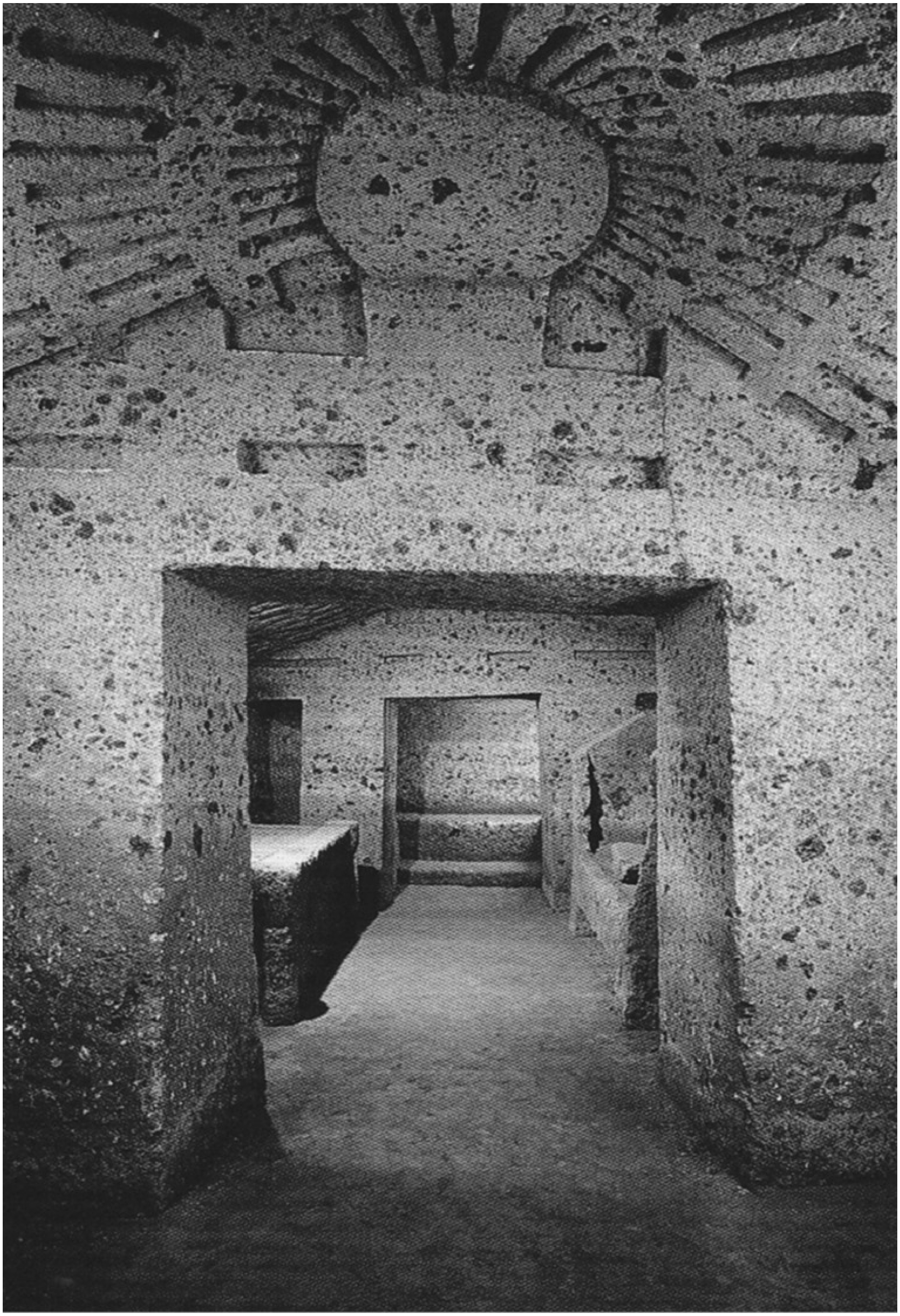

Fig. 12: Interior of an elaborate Etruscan tomb, Necropolis of Banditaccia, Caere (Italy)

Burial caves have also been found in the vertical walls of the impressive, artificial hollowed-out paths, which were considered “sacred paths.” These narrow, sometimes very deep hollow paths connected Etruscan hill settlements by descending with the watercourses in the gorges and by ascending again with the other hill settlements.[139]

However, it was their extraordinary joy of life that truly characterized Etruscan culture and this did not stop at their tombs. The inside of the funerary chambers was decorated with colorful murals; it was literally colorful and “vibrant” inside. No images of mourning or lamentation have been found, no gloomy, hostile conception of death, as with the Indo-European Greeks and ←414 | 415→Romans. Instead, Etruscan frescoes have scenes full of beauty and lust, reflecting a cheerful Otherworld and providing insight into the pleasurable lifestyle of the Etruscan women and men—reminiscent of the joy of life of the Minoan culture. Eating and drinking scenes were very important in this world, as well as in the Otherworld, and are the most frequent theme of the frescoes. As in Crete, banquets were probably not merely for profane entertainment, but were also religious ceremonies to celebrate the cohesion of clans and communities. It is interesting that an equal proportion of men and women is always depicted, the women not being hetaera or prostitutes, but the men’s wives. For example, the central painting in a tomb from Tarquinia shows three couples lying on three dining couches, entertained by a musician on a double flute and served by a naked boy, while in the center of the picture a woman brings a vessel with fine anointing oil (Fig. 13). The gestures are vivid and the colors of the robes are intense blue and red; the women and men alike are wearing laurel wreaths. The mural on the side ←415 | 416→wall in the same tomb shows the music and dance accompanying the feast, for a musician with a lyre, a graceful male dancer and two female dancers in delicate, transparent robes can be seen (Fig. 14). Women and men are depicted in the same size everywhere; their clothing is also the same, except for a fine upper garment worn by the women: a colorful tunic, sandals or ankle-high shoes. The skin color is striking, as men are depicted reddish-brown and women with a light to white skin, a stylistic feature known from the Minoan frescoes of Crete. The motifs used are also similar to the Minoan ones, as generally they show peaceful scenes, lacking pictures of warriors and battles.[140] Instead, cheerful banquets with dancing predominate, and we can even see a priestess dancing in a very colorful costume.[141] The humans are depicted interwoven with animals and plant motifs, in addition to exquisite landscapes with birds and boats which, as in Crete, are not only to be interpreted as decoration. Among the animals are some very non-Italian specimens, such as lions, leopards and monkeys. We can also see mythical ←416 | 417→beings, for example sphinxes resembling the Minoan representations, and huge powerful sirens as women with fish tails and wings, who have divine attributes. These and other so-called “oriental” symbols directly point to the Aegean origin of the Etruscans.

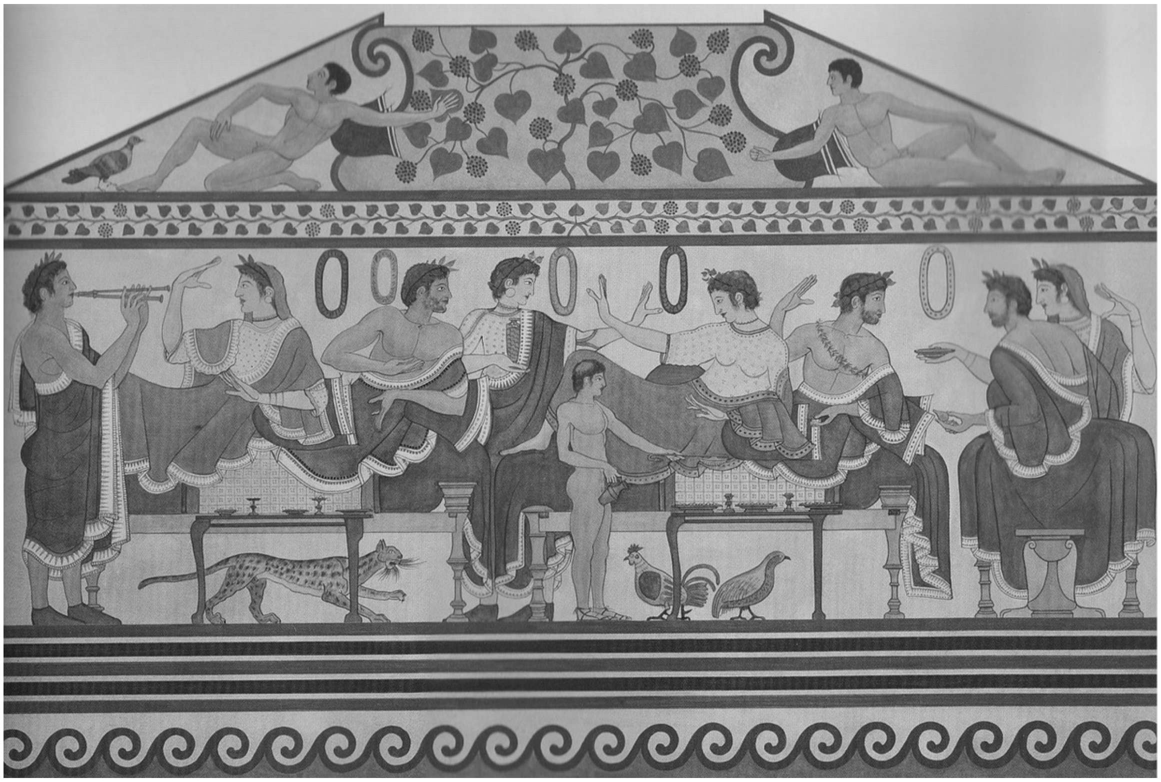

Fig. 13: Etruscan banquet, fresco on the back wall of the "Tomba del Triclinio," Tarquinia (Italy) (copy painting by Klaus Staps)

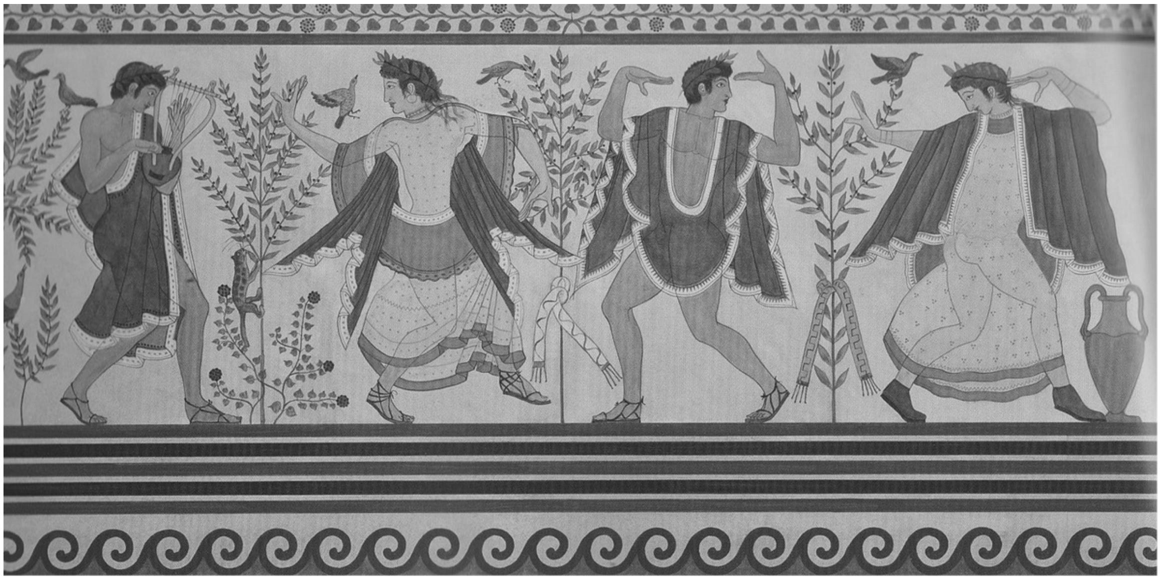

Fig. 14: Musician, dancing man and women, fresco on the side wall of the same tomb, Tarquinia (Italy) (copy painting by Klaus Staps)

The paintings show women appearing totally freely in public and demonstrate their high social status. Gender relations were egalitarian and based on partnership.[142] We can sometimes see married couples in loving devotion, with their individual facial features, represented as sculptures on the lids of the large stone sarcophagi, where the deceased tend to be depicted half-prone, as at a banquet (Fig. 15). The importance of women lay in their economic independence; they had property and wealth, and magnificent tombs were built not only for men but also for women.[143] Bilingual epitaphs also provide evidence of the matrilinearity prevailing among the Etruscans: besides the name of the deceased, the mother's name always appears in Etruscan, while the father's name is only written in Latin, pointing to the later, patriarchal influence of the Romans. The succession from father-in-law to son-in-law also proves matrilinearity, as there was no direct hereditary line among men. Names, titles, and estates were passed down along the female line, from mother to daughter, and a man could only inherit from his father-in-law as the husband of a daughter, for example when in the case ←417 | 418→of male titles. The Etruscan kings even owed their throne to a woman through such matrilineal succession.[144]

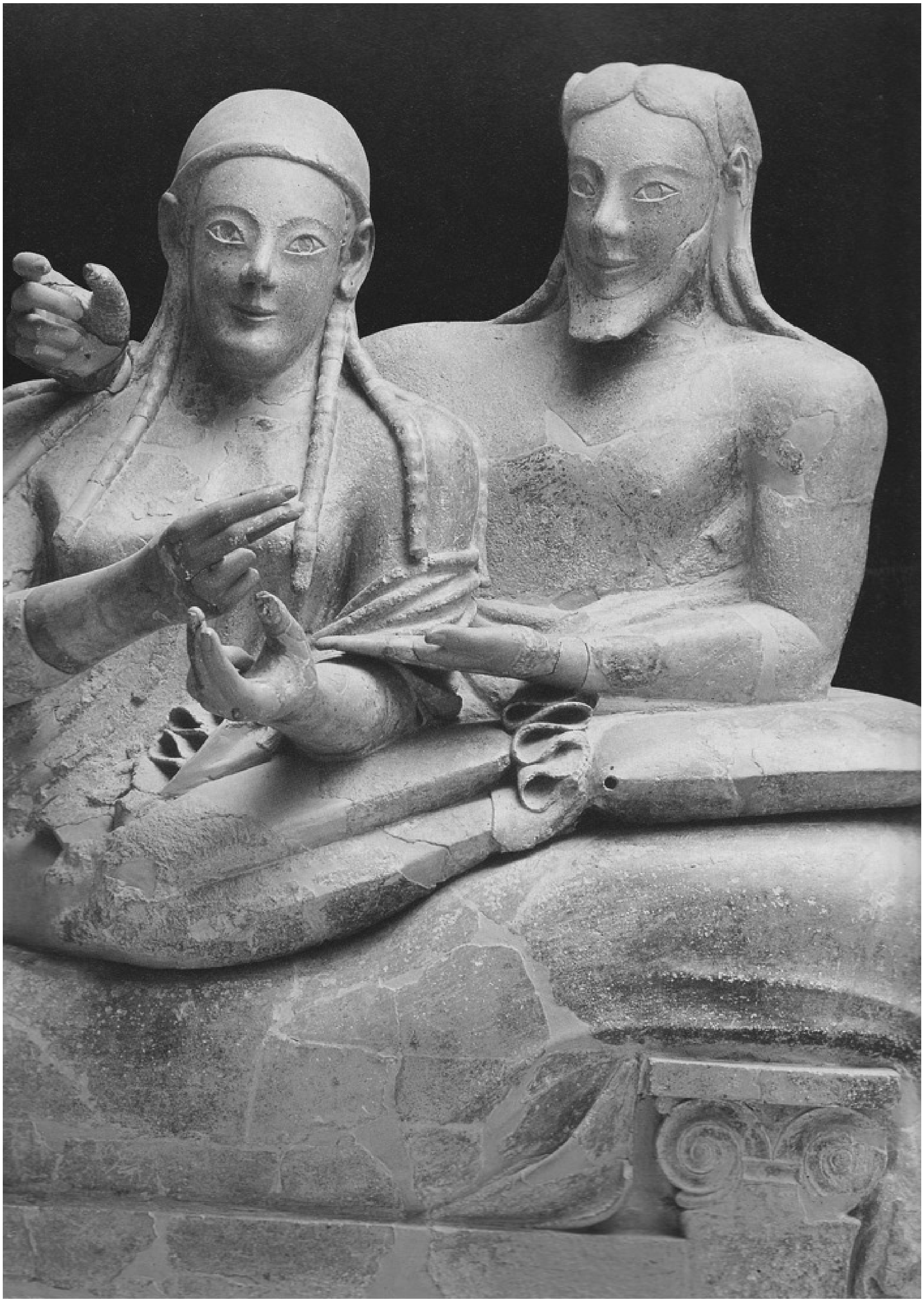

Fig. 15: Etruscan married couple, sculptures on a sarcophagus, Necropolis of Banditaccia, Caere (Italy) (Wikimedia Commons, author: Gerard M; section from the image)

This outraged the western Greeks in South Italy and the Romans on the Tiber. The Romans called the Etruscans a “fat and obese pack” because of their love of pleasure and consumption, while the Greeks claimed that Etruscan women lived an “immoral way of life.” It was impossible for Greeks to envisage wives at banquets who liked to drink and even make toasts! The Greek historian Theopompos (4th century) described the freedom of the Etruscan women with great astonishment: they thoroughly took care of their bodies, played sports together with the men—and did so naked! They were very beautiful, as well as literate and educated. They could also choose a man other than their husband for a love affair, which frequently happened after a banquet, and they raised all ←418 | 419→their children regardless of who the father was. In other words, although the Etruscans cultivated paired marriage, women not only had sexual freedom, but their educational rights were also independent of men, a clear consequence of the mother-line and of controlling their own property. Children were, in any case, named after their mother and belonged only to the mother’s clan.[145]

The Greeks and Romans, however, dreaded the thought of women of high status. In their opinion, strong women would lead to conflicts between the sexes, and they were therefore considered a “threat to the state power.” This is quite true for their patriarchal states, where women were much oppressed, as we have already seen for Athens. Roman women fared no better, as the patriarchal family order to which they were subjected was even stricter. In the Roman state the aim was to reinforce, not only a smaller or larger city state as it was with the Greeks, but a growing military “world empire” through absolute obedience from the inside. Roman women possessed nothing and inherited nothing; their only function was to keep house and bear children. Their duty was to give birth to three or four children, preferably sons, as the Roman Empire needed soldiers. A Roman woman did not even have a name of her own: first she was called “daughter of her father,” then “wife of her husband,” and if the husband died before her, she had to obey a legal guardian. Women were basically under the family power of men and never were free. These virtues in women were praised: obedience, submissiveness and faithfulness, so a wife had to submit not only to her husband’s patrilineal clan but also to his gods. The “pater familias,” the Roman father of the family, had absolute power over his wife and children (“patria potestas”). As for the children, he could abandon them if he did not like them, which mostly happened with little daughters. With regards to his wife, who like all women was considered inherently “bad,” he was obliged to give her strict guidance, threatening her when she was disobedient, physically chastising her and employing marital rape. He also had the right of life and death over her, meaning that he could kill her with impunity. Under Roman law a wife was considered as the husband’s private property, a mere object. On the other hand, a real man was expected to learn from love experiences with unmarried and married women, a practice which, of course, only harmed the seduced women. In all phases of the Roman state, Roman women were excluded from public life and politics; they were under the supervision of men throughout their entire lives, and it was ensured that they “did not get rid of their chains of slavery” (Roman people’s tribune).[146]

←419 | 420→

This was in sharp contrast to the culture of the Etruscan men and women. In view of all the above, it has become obvious that the Etruscans had brought with them a late matriarchal society from the Aegean region. This was a ranked society with weak kingship and a certain redistribution of wealth. The social order showed an equal sphere of action for both sexes and had a clan system based on matrilinearity and on equality between spouses. The equality of the sexes also applied in the pronounced veneration of ancestors, which was combined with a positive conception of the Otherworld, where life continues in joy and from where it returns. Most of the Etruscan deities were female; their Great Goddess was called “Uni” and was considered to be all-encompassing.[147] For

Etruscan women and men, the divine powers were always present and constantly intervened in events, because the divine was understood as immanent, as in the Minoan religion. The exploration of divine will was therefore of paramount importance for Etruscan priestesses and priests.[148]

Even the Romans recognized the Etruscans’ deep piety and their great conscientiousness in dealing with the divine. Nevertheless, they labeled them “fathers of superstition” in order to disparage them, even though the Romans took a large number of elements from Etruscan culture: in terms of architecture, urban planning, writing, art, symbolism, priestly oracles, and even deities. The Etruscan Uni became the Roman mother of the gods, Juno, albeit only as a submissive and jealous wife of the supreme Roman god, Ju-piter, which means “God-Father,” and the Etruscan Menevra became Minerva, a goddess of war who was fused with the Greek Athena.[149] In general, the Romans adopted the pantheon of Greek deities, which already reflected the patriarchal world of humans, merely giving them Roman names.

Nothing was more important to the Romans than to Romanize, which meant patriarchalizing the Etruscan way of life, which they viewed as dangerous as it was so close to home. They also competed for iron ore deposits and sea trade. Around 500 BCE the Romans rebelled against the Etruscan kings, who had been governing them for a long time, and in 474 they proclaimed the Roman Republic, which—as always in such cases—was a republic of men. When the Etruscans lost a great naval battle against the South Italian Greeks, their fate was sealed, for they now lacked the strength required to stop the aggressive expansion of Rome. The Romans had meanwhile weaponized intensively and, with their heavily armed cohorts, copying the Greek phalanx, they now waged a permanent war against their neighbors, who finally came under Roman rule in the 1st century. Although Etruscan elements were still firmly rooted in the political and religious life of Rome, the Etruscan language, culture and late matriarchal social order perished. After tenacious resistance the Etruscans finally had to become Romans.[150] From then on Etruscan women no longer posed a “threat to the state.”

In the following period, Roman poets and philosophers, like their Greek counterparts, were very eager to firmly establish misogyny, or hatred of women. With the expansion of the Roman Empire during the next centuries, not only their slave-holder society, but also Greco-Roman misogyny was spread throughout Europe.

Rhaetians, Sardinians, Basques: Forgotten Peoples to This Day

The history of the *Rhaetians* is closely linked to these changes in central Italy. The area where they settled, namely the southeastern border of the Friuli Alps and the southern Alpine valleys such as Adige Valley, and Val Camonica (Italy), as well as warm, middle Alpine valleys such as Vintschgau (South Tyrol), the Lower and Upper Engadin, Oberhalbstein and Domleschg (Switzerland), also the more northern Raetikon (Austria), had already been settled by farmers and herders in the Neolithic Age (see Map 10). These early people even ventured into the high areas of the main Alpine crests, as proven by the find of the famous “Iceman” (3,350–3,100). Ancient authors considered Rhaetians to be an “original people” with non-Indo-European language,[151] having nothing in common with the later Bronze Age cultures of the Italic tribes.[152]

But the so-called “Rhaetians” are not a homogeneous people, instead a group of different small tribes scattered throughout the Alps; it was the Romans who generally labeled them “Rhaetians.” However, all Rhaetian women and men had a particular custom. Ancient sources report that they came down regularly from the southern Alpine valleys to worship their goddess Rheitia, their Great Mother, in her sanctuary of Este in the Po Plain near Padua.[153] This proves that they once also inhabited the Po Plain, reached by crossing the Adriatic Sea, as these ethnic groups were of ancient Mediterranean origin. They responded the invasion of the early Indo-Europeans by withdrawing from the plain into the Alpine valleys.

As with all ancient Mediterranean peoples, their social order was matriarchal. This did not change even though, from the 6th century onwards, they came into contact with the Etruscans, who extended their cultivating and urbanizing activities into the Po Plain, for their social order was similar. A peaceful interchange was established, and they adopted the writing system from the Etruscans.[154] However, in the 5th century the Etruscans were not only harassed in the south by the Romans, who advanced with systematic conquests, but also in the north by the wild warrior hoards of the Celts. Celtic tribes waged war on large parts of Europe with their iron weapons, reaching North Italy and murdering and plundering there as well. They settled down in the fertile Po Plain, destroying the Etruscan culture in North Italy, and around 390 they even burned down the city of Rome. Again, various ethnic groups fled to the Alpine valleys, among them many Etruscans, but also Ligurians from the southwestern border of the Alps. Both contributed to the ethnic mix of the Rhaetians and left behind linguistic traces in the Rhaetian language.[155]

Once again, the Alpine valleys became a refuge for non-Indo-European peoples, although space was increasingly in short supply as the Celts also intruded the fertile mountain valleys, coming from the Po Plain. Rhaetian men and women had to retreat to even more remote valleys, such as those between the massive and precipitous rocks of the Dolomites, which protected them for a while. In the end, however, even here they could not escape subjugation, for finally the human war machine of the Roman cohorts conquered the Po Plain and penetrated the Alpine valleys. In 15 BCE the Romans occupied the entire Alpine area, turning it into two Roman provinces, the Southern and Northern Rhaetia. Rhaetians had fought back bravely, but in vain, and they were now colonized for 500 years and forced to adopt patriarchal customs and the Roman language, from which ←422 | 423→their new language, Rhaeto-Romanic, was born. Now they were called “Rhaeto-Romans,” and still live today, as Friulians in Italy, as Ladins in the east of South Tyrol and in Trentino, and as Rhaeto-Romans in the Swiss canton of Grisons.

Nevertheless, in spite of their Romanization and later Germanization, the Rhaetians have preserved elements of their matriarchal traditions to the present day. Evidence of this is given by the unique cycle of myths of the Ladins about the “Realm of Fanes” in the Dolomites, which tells of mountain goddesses and great queens. The mountain goddesses in the myths reflect the country’s nature: Tanna, the goddess of the craggy rock towers, who is both benign and dangerous; Samblana, the winter goddess with the glacier mantle; Merisana, the goddess of summer and green larches; and Delba, the sun goddess, who makes the lakes silvery shining. The Fanes queens are said to have founded a hidden realm in the mountains in alliance with the marmots, and to have prevailed against the Celts for a long time. Dolasilla, the last Fanes queen, defended the Fanes realm as an Amazonian warrior until she was betrayed and died.[156]—

This splendid epic cycle describing their matriarchal past in mythical images has been preserved by the Ladin women and men throughout the centuries.[157] Until the time of the Counter-Reformation, the entire Fanes cycle was performed at a festival every year, in spite of all the repression. In this way, despite the loss of their political autonomy, they were at least able to preserve their cultural identity. Only with the Counter-Reformation this festival was banned by the Church for its “pagan” content, this ban being enforced, as everywhere in Europe, by the physical extermination of “witches” and “heretics.” Nevertheless, Ladin women and men secretly told each other their old, glorious history almost up to the present-day, until this epic cycle was written down in the last century, when so-called “fairy tales and legends” were collected scientifically, and therefore saved.[158]

Today, the formerly coherent Alpine area where the Rhaeto-Romans and Ladins lived has been fragmented by excessive density of settlements and tourism, and their agricultural basis hardly exists anymore. Young people are migrating to the cities, and in spite of intensive efforts the Rhaeto-Romanic language is in danger of extinction. Moreover, Rhaeto-Romans are now scattered over three nation states, and exposed to very different conditions in terms of the preservation of their language and culture.[159]

The *Sardinians* from the large island of Sardinia west of Italy, like the Corsicans of Corsica, also belong to the original peoples of Europe. Through the millennia both islands were the subject of power struggles between alternate major powers that made use of Sardinia in particular due to its convenient location for sea routes (see Map 10). The island was much sought after as a stepping stone for these powers' dominance of maritime trade and because of its rich mineral resources. In the Middle Bronze Age, pre-Indo-European Ligurians from the western Mediterranean immigrated to Sardinia and peacefully allied with the local Neolithic population, introducing their megalithic culture there.[160] The early language of the Sardinian population was not Indo-European, but related to Basque, and their way of life was matriarchal. As peasant women and men, shepherds and shepherdesses, they lived in small communities and continued to survive from subsistence farming with collective land ownership until modern times. Early on they had retreated from the coastal area with its continuous arrival of new conquerors into the mountainous interior of Sardinia.[161]

However, before this happened, they developed their own particular architecture, for which Sardinia is still famous today, being known as the "Island of Towers." In the Sardinian language these towers are called "nuraghi," and this particular megalithic culture lasted from the Middle Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (1,600–900). Nuraghi are very large, multi-storey towers in the shape of truncated cones, their meter-thick walls made of large stone blocks, and covered by high, corbel-vaulted stone domes. The inner circle served as living space, and spiral staircases inside the walls lead to each floor, where further living spaces were built in (Fig. 16 a, b). They can be found in large numbers all over the island: seven thousand of such buildings are still known today, albeit in ruins, and it is estimated that there were several hundreds more in former times.[162] ←424 | 425→Some of them are up to 20 m high. They were not isolated, but located in the middle of the former settlements of circular houses, either individually, or in groups of two to five tower complexes.[163]

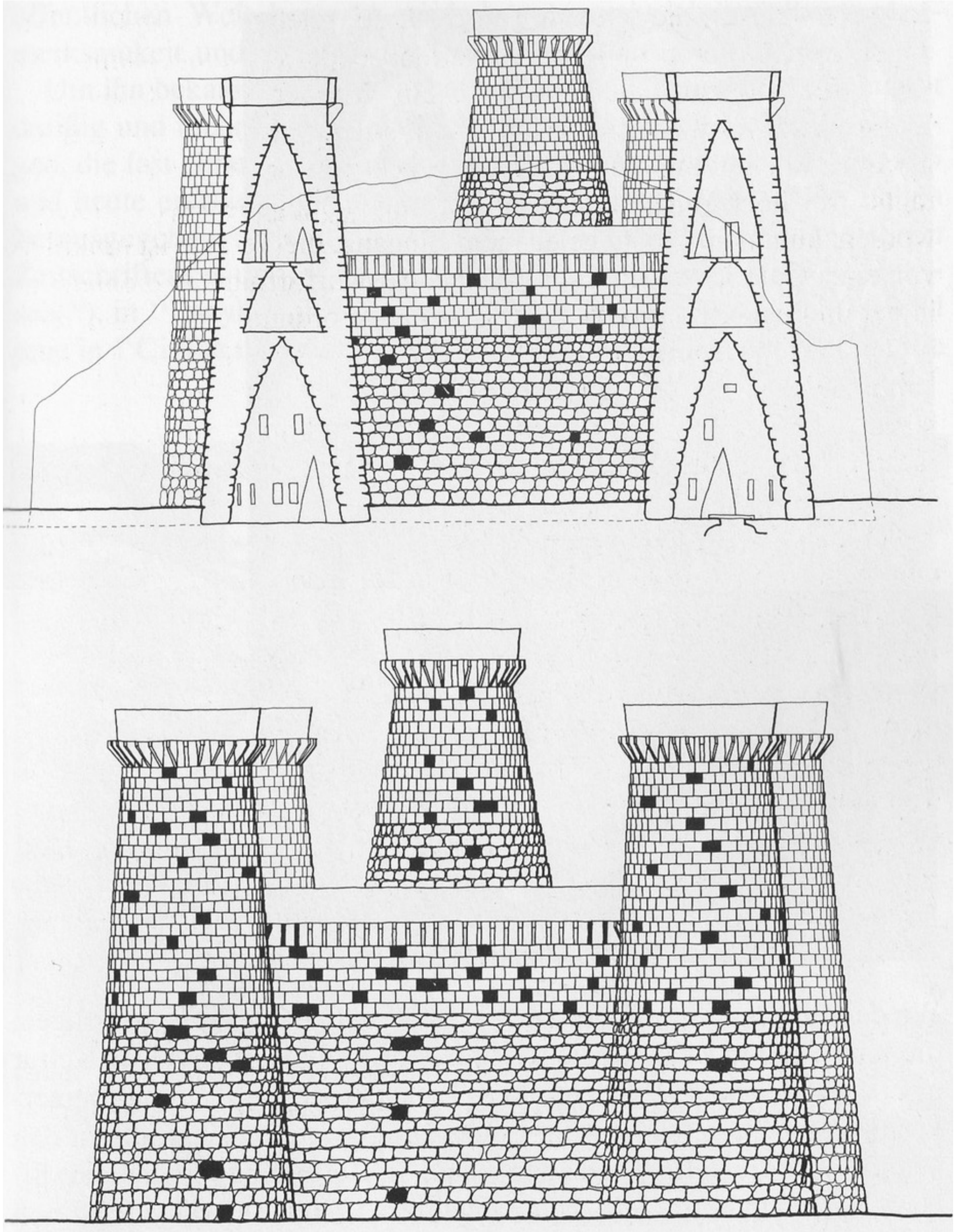

Fig. 16a, b: Nuraghe tower of Barumini with outer construction and four additional towers; reconstruction of sectional view and general view (Sardinia)

←425 | 426→In traditional theories, they are seen as fortifications built by local tribes, by aristocratic “elites” who had nothing better to do than to wage war against each other—the usual picture of the Bronze Age. However, several archaeological facts refute this interpretation. The early form of nuraghi are the so-called “proto-nuraghi,” which are not at all tower-like, but elevated platforms with an irregular outline, a narrow staircase leading up and small chambers inside (from 1,600). Such a structure is useless for military purposes, but is very suitable for religious ceremonies on the platform. Furthermore, such proto-nuraghi have been found in combination with sanctuaries.[164] Even these early buildings, made of large stone blocks, presume a strong cohesion among several communities with a good economic basis. This communal life is also evident from the so-called “giant tombs,” typical megalithic tombs with magnificent facades and long burial mounds (1,600–1,400) (see Fig. 9 of Chapter 4). They indicate both the high degree of architectural skill and the great community spirit of the people, for these were graves for collective use containing sometimes hundreds of bodies, with equal numbers of men and women.[165] This unmistakably points to an egalitarian society, still in the Bronze Age, as it had been passed on from the Neolithic in Sardinia.

The Bronze Age population of Sardinia can also be seen to cultivate an all-permeating religiosity, particularly evident in its so-called “water cult.” On a hot, dry island, water is very precious, thus every spring and every artificially dug well was covered with a small temple. These beautiful well temples consist of a corbel-vaulted stone dome over the spring and a wide staircase leading down to the water, in addition to open outer courts for religious ceremonies (Fig. 17 a, b).[166] Wells were also built within the nuraghi which were truly masterful, as evidenced by a perfectly-lined well 40 m deep, not to mention the water pipes and sewerage at hand in the towers and settlements. The wells in the towers, too, were considered sacred and revered, as shown by the vases and other offerings sunk into them.[167] It is notable that the ceremonies to worship water, which were the most important for the community, were performed by priestesses. Several bronze figurines depict such women wearing a high pointed hat, with long braids and a priestess' cope, and they are represented in a praying gesture, sometimes holding burning torches or sacrificial bowls or other objects (Fig. 18). On the ←426 | 427→other hand, no such images of male priests have been passed on. In fact, it seemed that people's lives were strongly influenced by religion, for many small bronze figures have sacred details, even in hunting scenes with men and wild sheep, as well as in votive boats containing birds and the sacred ram and bull, sometimes so densely populated it resembles a "Noah's Ark."[168]

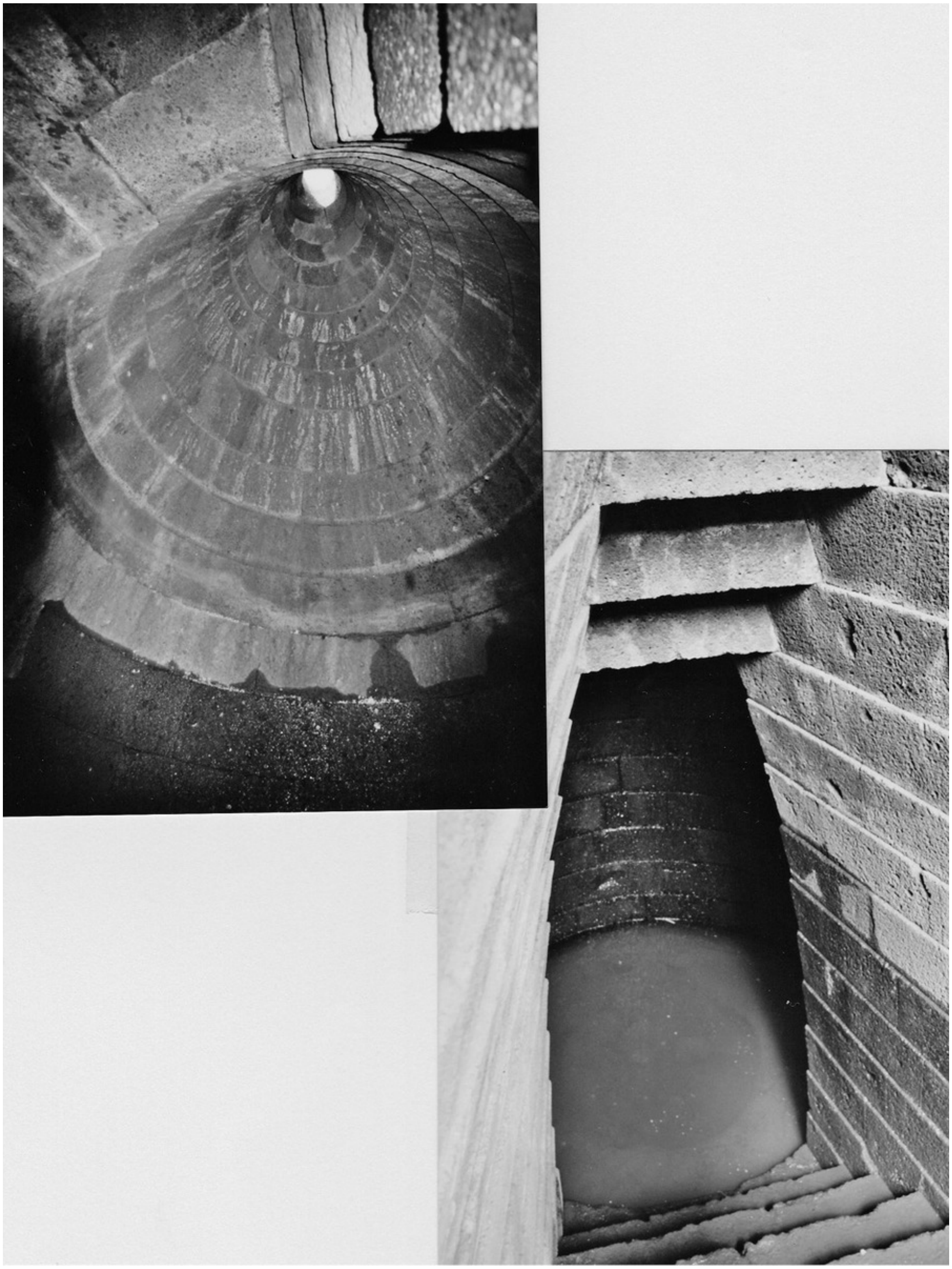

Fig. 17a, b: Well temple with corbel-vaulted stone dome, Santa Cristina (Sardinia) (Photos by Siegrun Claaßen)

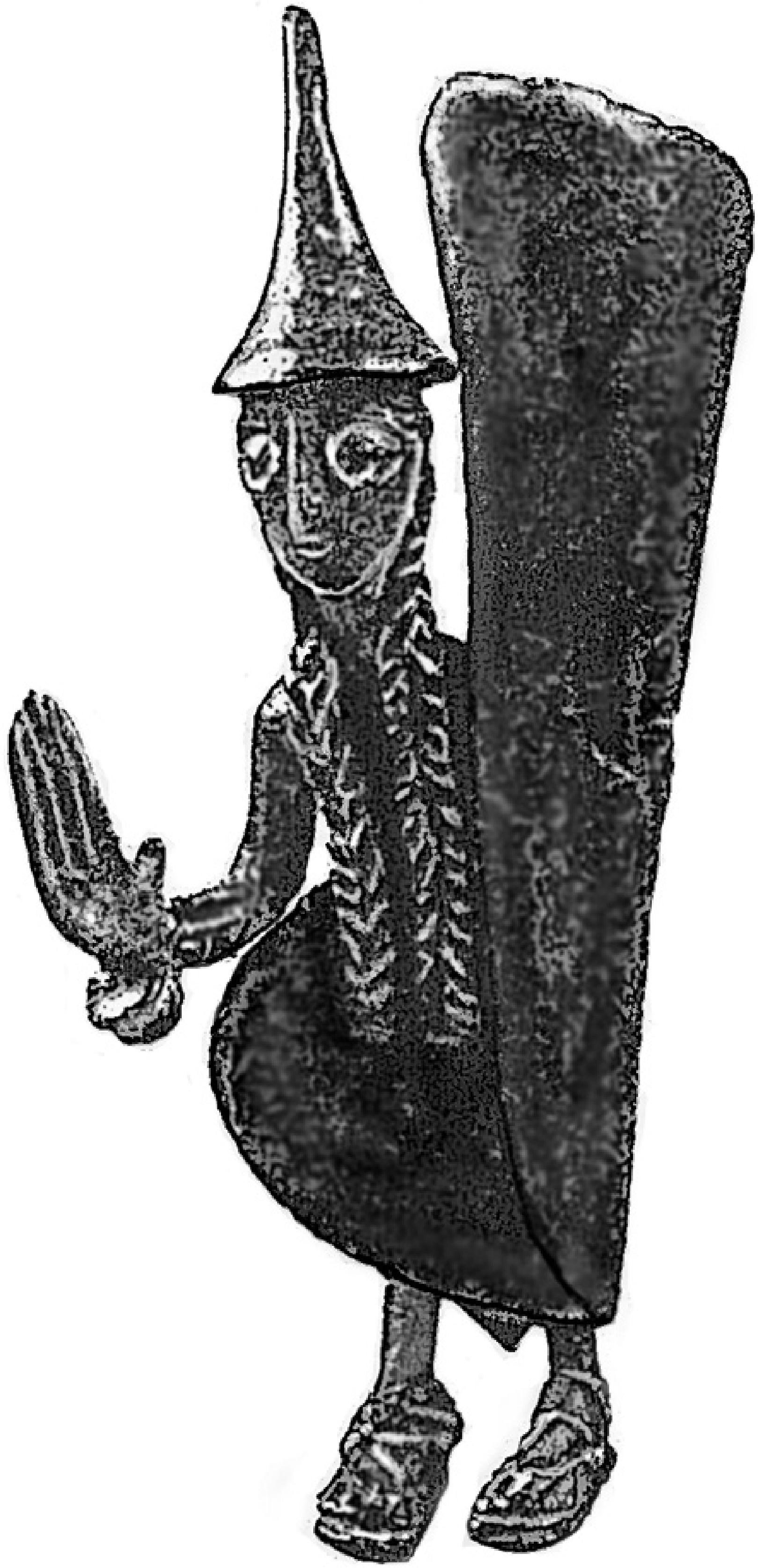

Fig. 18: Bronze figurine of a Sardinian priestess with pointed hat and plaits (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann after a Bronze figurine from Sardinia)

Not only the well temples, but also the nuraghi were sacred buildings, used for religious meetings and ceremonies. They were built communally and the towers were inhabited, as evidenced by the household utensils found inside, such as cooking ware and spinning whorls.[169] Thus women, too, perhaps as priestesses, ←427 | 428→led a quite normal life within these "fortified buildings," contradicting the common, warlike interpretation. A Sardinian legend also confirms this presumption, stating that nuraghi were used as temples for the deities, also including graves for probably Sacred Kings.[170] Small models of nuraghi have been found at other religious complexes, here being used as sacrificial tables, altars and even censers, pointing to the sacred nature of the towers. Scholars explain that all of the nuraghi took on a sacred role at the end of the Bronze Age (around 1,000), when no new ones were built.[171] Well, perhaps they had always been religious buildings!

This, however, does not preclude them having an additional function as protective structures during a certain phase of the nuraghic culture. In the Late Bronze Age (1,300–1,100), people settled in villages of circular houses around the nuraghi, according to their need for protection, being able to retreat into the towers when threatened. Some nuraghi now were provided with additional ←428 | 429→buildings, such as a massive bastion surrounding them.[172] Balconies with arrow slits at the top of the towers were important for archers as defense; in fact, several bronze statuettes of such archers have been found.[173] To explain this change, the thesis of mutually opposing chiefs of "ruling elites" cannot be upheld, as there is no evidence pointing to offensive weapons or warrior troops. The overlong bronze swords that archaeologists have found are unsuitable for fighting, and were exclusively consecrated to the deities, as shown by stone blocks with holes for the swords in the sanctuaries.[174] But it is suspicious that Mycenaean pottery appeared in some settlements, not only on the coast but even inland.[175] The island’s rich veins of metal ore attracted merchant ships from the eastern Mediterranean, arriving here via Sicily as a stopover. The threat for the locals came from outside, from the sea, as Mycenaean Achaeans were not squeamish when it came to their own interests. Their way of trading easily turned into raids, which probably worried the people of the nuraghic culture considerably, so that they now reinforced the nuraghi for defensive purposes.

After the collapse of the Mycenaean ruling centers, the Phoenicians began to sail the entire Mediterranean. The Sardinian metal trade flourished, so that some towns grew into cities (end of the Bronze Age to Early Iron Age, 1,100–900).[176] In 814, the Phoenicians founded Carthage on the North African coast, which was located just opposite Sardinia, and in the following century they established military bases on the southwest coast of the island. From 700 onwards, a number of nuraghi sites were extensively destroyed, as the Carthaginians brought their war of conquest to the island.[177] In the 5th century, Sardinia passed completely under Carthaginian domination, and its wealth of metals was taken away from the local people. The time of freedom for the Sardinians was over, their late matriarchal culture also coming to an end. The population, who had to work hard for their new masters, was pushed into misery and shrank; the nuraghi disintegrated. The end was finally sealed by the Romans, who deprived the Carthaginians of their dominion over the Mediterranean; they also occupied Sardinia, and their presence can be noticed by walls of rough, irregular construction which they added to older, perfectly constructed buildings. The language and customs of the Sardinian people now had to become Roman and thus patriarchal. But a few groups of natives withdrew to the remote mountainous interior of the island, where they continued to live as a community in the old way. Even today, Sardinian men and women are still passively and actively resisting exploitation by the Italian nation state and the property market and hotel business of modern tourism.[178]

The *Basques* belong to the original population of Spain, and form part of the pre-Indo-European Iberians. Unlike the other Iberian tribes, however, they resisted any assimilation into later powers thanks to their remote region in the westernmost corner of the Pyrenees (see Map 10). As a consequence, Basques are the oldest people not only in Spain, but in the whole of Europe. In terms of body type, they belong to the Cro-Magnon humans of the Late Palaeolithic: small people, no taller than 1.60 m, with a long back, short legs, and a large, round head, with a blood group that's very rare worldwide: type 0. Therefore, some researchers consider them to be the last Ice Age people. They have a flood myth, which may well refer to the "Great Thaw" of the former glaciers in the Pyrenees, the mountain range bordering Spain and France, where a large number of Palaeolithic cave paintings have been found.[179] It is generally accepted that their language and traditions date back at least to the Neolithic period.[180] The Mesolithic natives in Spain embarked on their own developmental path towards the Neolithicery early on (8th-7th millennium), and influences from the Mediterranean area did not appear until the 6th millennium.

The language of the Basques is pre-Indo-European and unique in Europe, for their tool vocabulary refers directly to the Stone Age, when no metal was known. All their names for tools contain the syllable "aiz," which means "stone," for example: "aizto" for "knife," "aizkora" for "hatchet," "aizkolari" for "ax," "aiztur" for "chisel," "aizkon" for "javelin," "orraitz" for "needle," "zilokaitz" for "awl," ←430 | 431→"aizhotz" for "sickle" for cutting grain, etc.[181] This language is always concrete and has no abstractions; though with 12 cases for declination and 97 tenses for conjugation it is extremely expressive, proving that it is a very old language. The Basques, and in particular Basque mothers, have preserved this language up to the present day, because it is seen as a "maternal language" given its figurative nature.[182]

The Basques call their country "Euskadi," once an area considerably larger than it is today. The mountain range of the Pyrenees can be regarded as its central spine; north of this are three smaller Basque provinces (France), and south of it four larger provinces on the Bay of Biscay (Spain). However, the name "Gascogne" for Southwest France, of which the old name is "Vasconie," shows that Basque was once spoken there as well (“gascon”-“vascon”-“basque”). The Basque people have seen a large number of conquerors come and go: the early Indo-Europeans, the Semitic Phoenicians, the Celts, the Romans, the Visigoths, and the Moors, but it never adapted or bowed, instead retreating into the remote limestone mountains of the Pyrenees.

Basque women and men have a clear, unyielding awareness of the value of their culture and its great age. One anecdote tells that, when they were told that cultural epochs are counted in millennia, they replied: “We don’t even count them.”[183] This is best shown by their ancient goddess religion and their lunar calendar, used almost up to the present day (early 20th century). Their Great Goddess is Mari, who has many local names in line with the caves where she appears. These caves are not just arbitrary, but are the Palaeolithic cave sanctuaries which abound in the Pyrenees; they were considered to be the mysterious uterus of the Earth. According to the myths, Mari usually lives inside the Earth, where she transforms whatever she wants into gold. Her underworld is beautiful; she bakes bread there, and rivers of milk and honey flow. She enters the upper world as a distinguished lady dressed in red with a golden spindle, surrounded by flames, or she is combing her hair with a golden comb, riding on a ram. When she appears at night, her head is illuminated by the full moon, also bringing the moonlight to the souls in the depths. There, she is often accompanied by a red bull.[184]—We can see that the underworld of the goddess is clearly paradisiacal, ←431 | 432→while in the upper world she wears the color of the life she gives. At night she appears exactly with the symbolism that is depicted in the Palaeolithic caves: the woman, the moon, and the bull, meaning death and rebirth.

Aside from her human form, the metamorphoses of this goddess are numerous. She does not only have a goose or goat foot, but also appears as a billy goat or young cow, as a raven or vulture, even as a tree. She populates the earth in these forms. But the sky is also her domain: she appears as a gust of wind, a white cloud, a rainbow, lightning and thunder, as well as a fireball or crescent of fire in the sky. As the weather goddess she brings storms, rain and drought. Also, the sun and the moon are female, as they are manifestations of the goddess. The seven stars of Ursa Major are regarded as her seven sisters, and the seven Basque provinces are associated with these stars.[185]—This diversity shows Mari as the Great Goddess of the three zones of the world: Heaven, Earth and the Underworld; she is the entire earthly-cosmic nature. This is the age-old, matriarchal worldview which, in this case, has been handed down to recent times not only in fragments, but completely in the form of this goddess.

Mari was also seen as the mother of humanity, guiding it through oracles. She established the divine laws and protected the ethos of commonness, punishing lies, stealing, arrogance and boasting, the breaking of promises and a lack of respect. She was worshiped everywhere, in caves, on mountain peaks, at springs, fountains and megalithic sites.[186] According to matriarchal spirituality she was omnipresent. The Basque bull cult also forms part of her veneration. This bull cult, too, is very ancient and was most widely spread among the pre-Indo-European Mediterranean cultures, where the bull never symbolized—as is claimed— “male fertility,” but was goddess’s moon animal and consecrated to her. For instance, on the famous Minoan “Bull-jumping fresco” (Taureador fresco, Knossos) we can see a large, red-spotted bull running, and two women and a man performing an acrobatic “bull jump” over the animal. At this jump, they grasp the horns of the animal and, when it throws back its head, somersault along its back, landing elegantly on the ground behind the bull. Even when the ←432 | 433→ bull was tame and the young acrobats had the best training, this was a dangerous jump. However, it was not a sport but a ritual act in honor of the Great Goddess, and if a fatal accident occurred, the Minoans probably believed the goddess had taken this sacrifice through her sacred animal.[187] Even in the Basque country today, young men still take this risk, namely when the bulls are released in the narrow streets of Pamplona and they run ahead of them, as close as possible, to show courage. Even if they no longer perceive of it in this way, the bull-run is also an ancient bull cult ritual, whose original meaning might have been the same as in Minoan Crete—because in Pamplona, too, sometimes victims occur among the heroes. On the other hand, in patriarchal Spain, the situation has been perverted, as the “Corrida,” or bullfight, is always about the bull being defeated and inevitably dying after it has been provoked, injured and tormented long enough. In this sense, the bullfight also represents, as in Marduk and Tiamat, the symbolic murdering of the mother goddess.[188]

The Basque “laminak,” or “hadas/fadas” (fairies), also are related to Mari.[189] They used to live in the same caves as the goddess, were tiny, and always dressed in white, spinning and weaving and washing their white linen in rivers, springs, and in the water of the caves and in megalithic basins. They did this on nights with a full moon, beating the wet cloths so loud that people could not sleep. During the day they would spread out their laundry to dry in meadows or hang it on megalithic stones. They were always compassionate and benevolent to people. They had small children without any fathers, and spoke Basque. Old people still claim that their grandmother, great-grandfather, great-great-grand-aunt, etc. had seen them, and that they were like themselves![190]—These tiny, white ladies can be found in folk mythology all along the Atlantic coast up to the North Sea and Baltic Sea, this being the route taken by the Atlantic Neolithic culture as it spread. In all cases, these fairies most probably conceal the last priestesses of the goddess, in the Basque country of the goddess Mari; they still protected the holy caves until they disappeared somewhere.[191] People also called them “Damas blancas” (“White ladies”). This was the reason why, during the late and laborious Christianization of the Pyrenees, the Church took the opportunity to superimpose their “Virgin Mary,” the servant maid of the Lord, on the White ladies and the Goddess Mari, turning the old holy caves and grottos into Christian pilgrimage sites, as happened at the famous Lourdes.[192]

←433 | 434→

Like the age-old beliefs of the Basques, their old social order has been damaged over the last few centuries. This was matriarchal for the longest time, namely for thousands of years, something that can still be seen in some of its patterns today. For instance, according to their tradition, they do not tend to use their father’s name but the name of the house. The house’s name is inherited and added to the individual first name, for ex., "Loisa de Pequerin" means "Louisa of the House Pequerin," or all the members of the house are called, together, "those of the House Pequerin." In each generation, the first-born male or female inherits the house with its name, the corresponding livestock and little farmland, so either the eldest son or the eldest daughter is the sole heir. They are considered as the "head of the house" and represent the extended family of 8–10 people living there to the outside world. On the village council, therefore, only these female and male heads of the house come together to decide on collective property issues, such as forests and mountain pastures where the animals graze in summer. This is egalitarian with regard to the heads of the house, but not for the others, as the younger ones do not inherit anything, nor do they own anything and have no voice on the village council. When marrying, a house's heir always marries a younger person from another house. These men or women, married into the house, may then consider themselves fortunate, but they do not have much say. Two heads of a house never marry, because then one would not know which house they belong to. Most of the younger siblings therefore remain unmarried, although they enjoy sexual freedom, in spite of the prohibitions of the Church. Nevertheless, their situation has forced many of them to emigrate, to France, Spain and South America.[193]

This situation no longer fully represents an egalitarian, matriarchal clan order. Perhaps an acculturation took place in this case, or the increasing poverty ←434 | 435→of the population may have played an even greater role when, over the centuries, people had to withdraw more and more into the barren mountain regions. In such places people tend not to have many children. A family with four or five offspring is considered "very numerous," fewer descendants were the rule.[194] Perhaps this is why there was no real choice as to whether a daughter or son should inherit, since the family had few children to fall back on. However, this represents a significant change in the original circumstances which date back to Neolithic times. At that time, these people lived in large areas of South France and North Spain on fertile plains along rivers with abundant water. There is no reason to assume they did not live together in large clan houses in numerous, extensive matriarchal clans. For the principle that a Basque woman can be the sole heiress of the house and therefore the head of the household does not stem from patriarchal patterns. In matriarchal societies there are exclusively female heads of the house, the matriarchs, and only daughters inherit this position. In the village council, in some cases the matriarchs themselves represent the clan to the outside, or, more often, their brothers as delegates of the clan. In each case, the pre-condition of this representation is a thoroughly discussed consensus decision of all the clan members, the older and the younger ones, so everybody has a say. It is interesting that, when describing the people of the Pyrenees, the ancient writer Strabo called their social order a “true matriarchy.”[195] As usual with ancient authors, he meant the notoriously false “female domination,” nevertheless this indicates that, in his epoch, there were obviously only female “heads of the house,” contrary to the later situation.

Additionally, the practice of using the house name for all those within a house is revealing here, for the question is where such house names come from. In all matriarchal cultures, the house is identified with the woman and not the man. Thus, with the Basques, the name of the house could be the name of the ancestress who once founded the house, and hence it became a clan name. House names are therefore covert female clan names, and it is likely the house was formerly only passed on to daughters along the mother-line. But even though a man could inherit the house in later times, he was still a “son of the ancestress” through the house name. In the Middle Ages, at the time of the Salian emperors (12th century), Salic law excluded women from inheriting. Yet, in the Pyrenees, this law was not known and nothing changed.[196] Only the French Revolution, ←435 | 436→which so progressively brought equality to citizens, disinherited Basque women with its legislation (1791), as equality did not apply to female citizens. Basque women revolted against this for years, but it was in vain. They had to wait until 1945 for modern legislation to give them back the social equality they had always had before.[197]

Today, urban Basque men and women are fighting to preserve their language and culture, also with armed struggle through their organization

ETA. However, the mountain villages of the Pyrenees are emptying as young people emigrate, leaving behind many elders who are heirs and heiresses of a house.

Let us summarize the results of this chapter.

- Three *waves of conquest by Indo-Europeans* from the eastern steppes fundamentally changed the cultural landscape of Europe. Their *patriarchal, herder-warrior culture* spread from Southeast Europe, where it was most destructive, across the entire continent (Indo-Europeanization of Europe), weakening towards the west and north. Male Indo-European invaders took native women from pre-Indo-European, matriarchal cultures as their wives and, from this, the mixed societies of the Bronze Age emerged.
- Late matriarchal cultures in South Europe:

At the same time *late matriarchal cultures* still existed *in the Bronze Age*. For example:

- *Minoan Crete:* Around the Aegean Sea and later throughout the whole Mediterranean area, a new dynamic of seafaring peoples developed, triggered by limited land (on the coast and islands) with high population density. In this context, Bronze Age Crete represents a matriarchal high culture, which, due to its insular protection, was able to develop for an exceptionally long time. Its *economy* was based on small-scale, specialized horticulture and agriculture by women and extensive maritime trade by men. The distribution of goods was general; it was an egalitarian economy of balance. The *social order* was based on matrilineal clans, with men and women having equivalent spheres of action: the men being responsible for seafaring and maritime trade, the women being responsible for the clans in the domestic sphere and for religion in public. The Minoan temple palaces served the clans of a city or region as places for meetings and religious gatherings. *Religion* was central to this culture; not only were the temple palaces dedicated to it, but the entire landscape was sacred. As religious representatives of each city, a First Priestess acted as a representative of the Goddess and the Sacred King (Greek: “Heros”) was assigned to her as a representative of the people, although both without any political power. This is the characteristic structure of *late matriarchal thea-cracy.*

- Patriarchalization in South Europe:
- *Greece:* The matriarchal urban culture of Crete was destroyed by the Indo-European *Achaeans from the Mycenaean civilization,* as were many other city states with matriarchal elements on the coastline of Asia Minor. The Achaeans were followed by the herder warriors of the *Dorians,* who already possessed iron weapons and brought widespread destruction. In that way, the Iron Age began as the “Dark Centuries” without any culture in Greece. Eventually, the *military state of Sparta* and the early *commercial capitalism of the Athenians* (Attica) and *Ionians* (coastal cities of Asia Minor) formed. The *status of Greek women* in these patriarchal states was *dependent to low,* consisting of oppression and exploitation, albeit in different ways and to differing degrees.
- *Italy:* The *Etruscans* still possessed a *late matriarchal culture,* which was destroyed by the Romans. In contrast to the egalitarian lifestyle of Etruscan women, *Roman women* were subjected to *extremely strict patriarchalization*.
- *Today’s peoples in South Europe:* Some South European peoples still possessed, almost up to the present day, *residual matriarchal patterns* pointing to former matriarchy: the *Rhaetians* in the Alps, the *Sardinians* in Sardinia, and the *Basques* in Spain and South France.

Definition

The *late matriarchal form of society* is characterized by an *economy of balance* and *equality of the sexes.* The social order is still *free from domination,* based on matrilineal clans and collective consensus through a *system of councils. Special ranks* exist, such as the High Priestess and the Sacred King; these persons are *elected religious representatives* and have no political power, with the Sacred King depending on the High Priestess (matriarchal kingship). These are *ranked societies with honorary positions,* but without any hierarchy of dominant and dominated classes. The society focuses on goddesses and is sacred in the sense of an all-embracing spirituality: a *thea-cracy.*

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1 See Chapter 5 of the book in hand.

2 Gimbutas: *The Civilization of the Goddess,* 362–363.

3 Op. cit., 363–364.

4 "Kurgans" are defined as individual burial mounds where high-status men were buried, in contrast to the collective hill graves of the matriarchal cultures of Europe.

5 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 361–363.

6 Op. cit., 369.

7 Op. cit., 369–371.

8 Op. cit., 366, 371.

9 In Bulgaria it is the Indo-European Esero culture, in Macedonia the Sitagroi culture.

10 In these countries it is called the Baden culture.

11 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 141.

12 Op. cit., 371–372, 379.

13 Op. cit., 375, 381–384.

14 Op. cit., 353, 376–377.

15 Op. cit., 384, 387.

16 One example is the rich chieftain tomb near Mala Gruda on the Adriatic Sea (western Bosnia).

17 These are the sites of Lerna, Tyrins, Asine, Zygouries, Agia Kosmas, where the destroyed ancient cities were located.

18 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 387–389.

19 Op. cit., 390–391.

20 The different development of Indo-European languages in southern Europe and in Europe north of the Alps supports this. The later languages of Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic in northern Europe form a large group, while the languages Greek, Illyrian, and Thracian in southeastern Europe form a separate group that cannot be derived from the other. See J. P. Mallory: *In Search of the Indo-Europeans; Language, Archaeology and Myth,* London 1991, Thames and Hudson.

21 K. Kristiansen: "Eurasian Transformations: Mobility, Ecological change, and the Transmission of Social Institutions in the Third millennium and Second millennium BC," in: *The World System and the Earth System: Global Socioenvironmental Change and Sustainability since the Neolithic,* eds. Alf Hornborg and Carole L. Crumley, Walnut Creek, California 2007, Left Coast Press, 149–162.

22 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 392–393.

23 Numerous legends in Europe point to remains of the old matriarchal peoples in areas of refuge, where they appear as "Little People," "fairies," "dwarfs," "forest and moorland women/men," etc. An analysis of such legends shows that their behavior matches matriarchal patterns. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie;* Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen.*

24 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 352–401.—However, we do not use Gimbutas' terms "Kurgan theory" and "Kurgan culture," because these encompass too many different individual cultures which differ considerably. See the criticism of Russian archaeologists in Anthony: *The Horse, the Wheel and Language*, 306–307.

25 Colin Renfrew: *Archaeology and Language. The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*, London 1987, Pimlico.

26 J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams: *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World*, Oxford-New York 2006, Oxford University Press, 166 f.; Haarmann: *On the trail of the Indoeuropeans*, German edition: *Die Indoeuropäer*, 53.

27 A. Goldberg, T. Guenther, N.A. Rosenberg, M. Jakobsson: "Ancient X Chromosomes Reveal Contrasting Sex Bias in Neolithic and Bronze Age Eurasian Migrations," in: *Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History*, ed. W. Haak, Jena, Germany, January 12, 2017, in: https://www.nature.com/articles/nature14317. Also an older study: W. Haak, et al.: "Massive Migration from the Steppe Was a Source for Indo-European Languages in Europe," *Nature*, Vol. 522, June 11, 2015, 207–211. For the " Bell Beaker people" in western Europe and southern England proved by the study of W. Haak, K. Kristiansen, P.W. Stockhammer, et al.: "The Beaker Phenomenon and the Genomic Transformation of Northwest Europe," May 9, 2017: https://www.biorxiv.org/content/early/2017/05(09/135962.full.pdf+html)

28 Basing on these DNA analyses, Renfrew admitted in a public speech in fall 2017 that Gimbutas was right with her theory; see Colin Renfrew: "Marija Rediviva. DNA and Indo-European Origins," Oriental Institute, Chicago, November 8, 2017.

29 However, these genetic studies were limited to the third Indo-European wave of invasions, the first two waves had not been recorded yet. For these, however, Gimbutas delivered abundant archaeological evidence in: *Civilization*. See also the archaeological evidence by Nicolai Merpert: "The Earliest Indo-Europeanization of the North Balkan Area in Light of a New Investigation in the Upper Thracian Valley," in: *From the Realm of the Ancestors. An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. Joan Marler, Manchester, CT, USA, 1997, Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, Inc., 70–77.

30 Goldberg, Guenther, Rosenberg, Jakobsson: "Ancient X chromosomes."

31 K. Kristiansen and E. Willerslev et al.: "Re-theorizing Mobility and the Formation of Culture and Language among the Corded Ware Culture in Europe," Cambridge, *Antiquity Publications*, Vol. 91, edition 356, April 2017, 342, in: https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms

32 Op. cit., 343.

33 Ibid.

34 See the critical comments in Chapter 4 of the book in hand.

35 Renfrew and his followers.

36 Gimbutas speaks of "patriarchal" and "matristic" instead of "matriarchal," because she was not yet familiar with the new definition of "matriarchy" as an egalitarian form of society, as has been demonstrated in modern Matriarchal Studies. It is significant that, in the DNA study by Kristiansen and Willerslev, which confirms Gimbutas' theory, but her name is nevertheless not mentioned.

37 Jean Guilaine, in: *Die ältesten Monumente der Menschheit*, 170–171.

38 The designation of the ancient Cretan culture as "Minoan" is rather improperly derived from a "King Minos," who did not exist here in the sense of the "Big Man" and individual ruler.

39 The origin of the ancient Cretan people from Anatolia was proven by DNA analysis, see I. Lazaridis, A. Mittnik et al.: “Genetic origins of the Minoans and Mycenaeans,” *Nature* No. 548, 10th April 2017, 214–218, in: https://www.nature.com/articles/nature23310

40 Joan Marie Cichon: *Matriarchy in Minoan Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies*, San Francisco 2013, Dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, 256–257; Joan Marie Cichon: *Matriarchy in Minoan Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies*, Oxford 2022, Archaeopress. The numbers of the pages refer to Cichon’s dissertation. Peter M. Warren: *Myrtos: An Early Bronze Age Settlement in Crete*, London 1972, Thames and Hudson, 266–267. Carol P. Christ: “Crete, Religion and Culture,” in: *Encyclopedia of Women in World Religions: Faith and Culture across History*, ed. Susan de Gaia, Santa Barbara CA 2019, ABC-Clio Santa Barbara.

41 Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 345; Cichon, 272–273.

42 Cichon: Ibid.; Nanno Marinatos: *Minoan religion: Ritual, Image and Symbol*, Columbia 1989, University of South Carolina Press, 48, 50.

43 Quote from Leonard Wooley, see Gimbutas: *Civilization*, 344.

44 According to reports by ancient authors, see Y.V. Andreyev: *From Eurasia to Europe: Crete and the Aegean World in the Bronze and Early Iron Ages (3rd – early 1st millennia BC)*, Louvain-Walpole, Belgium 2013, Peeters, 113.

45 Glassman: *The Origins of Democracy*, 747; Arthur Cotterell: *The Minoan World*, New York 1979, Charles Scibner&Sons.

46 Greek legends speak of the “thalassocracy” of Minos, without it being clear what this was. The statements made by the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides (5th century) on this topic show blatant self-contradictions.

47 Andreyev, 129; Keith Branigan: “Minoan Community Colonies in the Aegean?” in *The Minoan Thalassocracy. Myth and Reality*, eds. R. Hagg and N. Marinatos, Stockholm 1984, Åström.

48 Joan Marie Cichon: *Matriarchy in Minoan Crete. Matriarchy in Minoan Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies*, San Francisco 2013, Dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies; and: *Matriarchy in Minoan Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies*, Oxford 2022, Archaeopress.

49 See Chapters 2 and 4 of the book in hand.

50 Dorothy Cameron: “The Minoan Horns of Consecration,” in: *From the Realm of the Ancestors*, ed. Joan Marle, 508–518.

51 Since the excavator of Knossos, Sir Arthur Evans, most scientists agree on the sacred significance of these scenes; see Sir Arthur Evans: *The Palace of Minos*, 4 Vols, London 1921–1935, Macmillan & Co.

52 Young men wear the short loincloth, while older men wear long, loose garments which have no similarity to women’s garments.

53 This custom also existed in the cultures of West Asia, for ex., the priests of the Kybele religion wore women’s clothes. From this tradition, which was still valid in the cult of Kybele in Rome, where she had a temple, originated the custom of Christian-Catholic priests wearing long women’s garments until today.

54 The symbol of the double ax can already be found in Neolithic Anatolia, for ex. in Çatal Höyük, and in the Syrian Halaf culture. In later patriarchal contexts it became a symbol for thunder and lightning in the hands of male gods, such as the Hittite Teshub.

55 See the illustrations in Andreyev, 193, 194, 198, 202, 206, 216, 217.

56 Marija Gimbutas and Miriam Robbins Dexter: *The Living Goddess*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1999, University of California Press, 142–145.

57 See Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and her Heros.*

58 Examples of such signet rings, in Andreyev, 185–192.

59 Mural in Akrotiri, Thera (today Santorini), Xeste 1, western house, room 5.

60 The beautiful paintings on objects and walls were most likely carried out by women, as women had always been the painters in decorating the pottery. Female artists also created the exquisite Kamares ware, which depicts the plant and animal world in constant motion. These are also religious motifs, as movement stood for life and the dance of divine energy. See Andreyev: "Ecstatic Art," in: Andreyev, 339 f.

61 Buildings with porticos sometimes had more than three floors, as a height difference had to be overcome.

62 This can be seen in the reconstruction of Arthur Evans for Knossos, which we consider to be accurate. Small paintings show this symbolism of the architecture.

63 Andreyev, 155, 157, 165–166, 173. Andreyev provides a very nice presentation of Minoan artwork with good interpretations, as well as an apt description of Minoan spirituality. However, he constantly degrades this culture as "backward," "collectivist," and "irrational" and speaks of the "superstitious Minoans," who know no "individuality" and are a "primitive people" who practice "fetishism," "animism," etc. All this reflects his deep lack of understanding for this culture, which he judges, totally inappropriately, on the basis of the model of Greek patriarchal society.

64 See also Carol P. Christ: "A Working Hypthesis for the Study of Religion in a Minoan Village: The Theories of Harriet Boyd Hawes, Marija Gimbutas, Heide Goettner-Abendroth and Jan Driessen," in: *The Journal of Archaeomythology*, ed. Joan Marler, Vol. 11, Sebastopol, CA, Fall/Winter 2021/2022.

65 See, for example, Andonis Vasilakis: *Minoan Crete from Myth to History*, Athens 2001, Adams Editions.

66 Thomas F. Strasser: "Storage and States in Prehistoric Crete: The Function of the Koulouras in the First Minoan Palaces," in: *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, No. 10 (1), 1997, 73–100. Ilse Schoep: "The State of Minoan Palaces or the Minoan Palace State?," in: *Aegaeum 23: Monuments of Minos: Rethinking the Minoan Palaces*, eds. Jan Driessen, Ilse Schoep, Robert Laffineur, Proceedings of the International Workshop "Crete of the Hundred Palaces?", Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, December 2001, 15–33.

67 Ilse Schoep: "Social and Political Organization on Crete in the Proto-Palatial Period: The Case of Middle Minoan II Malia," in: *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, No. 15, 2002, 101–132.—In spite of her excellent criticism of the centralism hypothesis, Schoep brings into play such "parties" as groups competing with each other, so that "complex power relations" emerged. See the critique by Cichon, 478, 481.

68 Ilse Schoep: "Bridging the Divide between the Prepalatial and the Protopalatial Periods?" in: *Back to the Beginning: Reassessing Social and Political Complexity on Crete during the Early and Middle Bronze Age*, eds. I. Schoep, P. Tomkins, J. Driessen, Oxford 2012, Oxbow Books, 415.

69 Cichon, 481–484.

70 Large matriarchal societies carry out consensus politics through a sophisticated council system. See the political order of the Iroquoian League, which consisted of five major tribes, in Barbara A. Mann: *Iroquoian Women*.

71 In its heyday, the city and region of Knossos contained about 18,000 people.

72 Yannis Hamilakis: “Too Many Chiefs?” in: *Aegaeum 23: Monuments of Minos*, eds. Jan Driessen, Ilse Schoep, Robert Laffineur, 179–199.

73 See the reciprocal, balanced economy practiced by women in Juchitán, Mexico, in Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen: *Juchitán*. Such an economy is also called a “gift economy” and is based on maternal values, as opposed to theories of the gift economy which omit women and mothers. See Genevieve Vaughan: *For-Giving*. Joan Cichon has identified these economic patterns for the Minoan culture of Crete, see 493–494.

74 Keith Branigan: “Early Minoan Society–The evidence of the Mesara Tholoi reviewed,” in: *Aux Origines de l’Hellénisme*, ed. C. Nicolet, Paris 1984, Centre Gustave Glotz, 29–37.

75 Jan Driessen: “The Court Compounds of Minoan Crete: Royal Palaces or Ceremonial Centers?” in: *Athena Review* No. 3(3), 2003, 57–61. Jan Driessen: “A Matrilocal House Society in Pre- and Protopalatial Crete?” *Academia.edu*. Accessed January 23, 2012, in: www.academia.edu/455197/A_Protopalatial_Matrilocal_Minoan_society

76 See Chapter 6 of the book in hand.

77 Driessen: “A Matrilocal House Society,” 372.—A good example is the “Quartier Nu,” a large building in Mallia (20 by 32 m), showing the close relationship between residential spaces, a central ritual place and a single kitchen for the whole clan. See J. Driessen and H. Fiasse: “‘Burning down the House:’ Defining the Household of Quartier Nu at Malia Using GIS,” in: *Stega: The Archaeology of Houses and Households in Ancient Crete*, eds. Kevin T. Glowacki and Natalia Vogelkoff-Brogan, Hesperia Supplement 44, Princeton NJ 2011, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 285–296.

78 Carl Knappett: “Scaling Up: From Household to State in Bronze Age Crete,” in: *Inside the City in the Greek World: Studies in Urbanism from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Period*, eds. Sara Owen and Laura Preston, Oxford 2009, Oxbow Books, 14–26.

79 Herodotus I, 173.

80 These sources in Bachofen: *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 61.

81 Herodotus, Strabo, Aelian, Plato; see Op. cit., 111–112.

82 The various ancient authors mention the Leleges, Carians, Aetolians, Pelasgians, Caucones, Arcadians, Epeians, Minyans, Taphians, Locrians and others.

83 Cichon, 501.

84 Op. cit., 458.

85 Jusseret, Driessen, Letesson: “Minoan Lands? Some Remarks on Land Ownership on Bronze Age Crete,” in: http://www.academia.edu/798982/Minoan_Lands_Some_Remarks_on_Land_Ownership_on_Bronze_Age_Crete, Section 3.4.

86 Paul Rehak: “Enthroned Figures in Aegean Art and the Function of the Mycenaean Megaron,” in: *Aegeum 11: The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean*, 1995, 112, ed. P. Rehak, Proceedings of a Panel Discussion Presented at the “Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America,” New Orleans, Louisiana, December 28, 1992.

87 This is the Minoan version of the Rhea myth, which was later patriarchally distorted by the Greeks. See Graves: *Greek Mythology*, 33, g; 46, b; 91, a, b; 261, 2. See also the type of Hero and Holy King in Frazer: *The Golden Bough*.

88 See the same constellation also in Inanna and Dumuzi (Sumer), Kybele and Attis (Asia Minor), Ashera and the pre-Israelite El, Anat and Ba’al, Heba and Abdiheba (Old Palestine), Atargatis and Hadad (Old Syria), Isis and Osiris, Hathor and the pre-dynastic Horus (Egypt), Rhea and the Cretan Zeus, Demeter and Iakchos (Crete), Aphrodite and Adonis (Cyprus), Hera and the pre-Hellenic Heracles, Artemis and Aktaion, Athena and Erechtheus (Greece) and others, in Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*.

89 Alexander Marshack: *The Roots of Civilization*, New York 1972, McGraw-Hill, 90.—Marshack shows that the use of such staffs began in the Palaeolithic, when the lunar calendar was invented.

90 See Chapter 2 of the book in hand.

91 These two royal insignia can also be seen in the hands of a priestess; see the cylinder seal of Knossos, illustration in: Andreyev, 148.

92 This interpretation comes from Andreyev, 151, which he formulated based on Arthur Evans. However, he still considers the young man on this cup to be a reigning king.

93 A large number of doubts has been expressed about the reconstruction of this painting; nevertheless, we would like to hint at it here, at least.

94 Spyridon Marinatos: “The Volcanic Destruction of Minoan Crete,” in: *Antiquity*, 1939. Marinatos’ findings were confirmed by Ninkovich Vitaliano and Yukoyama Heezen, in: Christos Doumas (ed.): *Thera*, London 1983, Thames&Hudson. See also Carey Sigurdsson: *Thera 2006 Expedition*, in: https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/06blacksea/logs/summary_thera/summary_thera.html

95 These waves of eruption have been detected by volcanologists, and archaeologists made the chilling find of skeletons from the crowd at the harbor, buried under ash.

96 Vitaliano Ninkovich and Yukoyama Heezen, in Doumas: *Thera*.

97 Bennet G. Galanopoulos Jr., in Doumas: *Thera*.—Not only these Egyptian records, but also myths speak of this disaster (for ex., the myth of Bellerophon in Asia Minor and the myth of the monster Typhon in Greece, see Ranke-Graves). The Bible, in addition, reporting the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, describes the consequences of the volcanic eruption with the “Egyptian plagues.” The myth of Atlantis, the sea-sunken high culture that lived in peace and prosperity, also refers to the destruction of the Minoan culture on Thera and Crete; see Plato: *Timaeus* and *Kritias*.

98 The largest fortresses with a city were Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, and Thebes.

99 For example Helena, not her husband Menelaus, represented the dynastic line of the Lacedaemons in Sparta (see Glassman, 773).

100 Homer’s epic *Iliad* describes the conquest of Troy, which still had many matriarchal elements, by the Mycenaean Achaeans.

101 For these processes in the eastern Mediterranean as a whole see Margalit Finkelberg (ed.): *The Sea People*, Tel Aviv-Cambridge UK 1992, Cambridge University Press. Emily T. Vermeule: *Greece in the Bronze Age*, Chicago 1968, Chicago University Press, 273–274.

102 The Hittites possessed iron weapons as early as 1,400–1,200, in Greece they appeared from 1,100 onwards.

103 Glassman, 773–775, 764–769.

104 A. M. Snodgrass: *The Dark Age of Greece*, Edinburgh 1971, University Press.

105 Glassman, 1101.

106 See the Zeus myths and their interpretation in Graves, No. 9, 12, 13, 14.

107 Glassman, 776–779, 787; Sarah Pomeroy: *The Spartan Women*, New Haven, CT 2008, Yale University Press.

108 Pomeroy: Ibid.

109 Ibidem; Glassman: Op. cit.

110 See the legislation of the Lycurgus; Glassman, 791–801, 1172–1173; Pomeroy: *The Spartan Women*; Sue Blundell: *Women in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, MA 1955, Harvard University Press, 113–140.

111 Graves, 41–42.

112 On these patriarchal transformations, which were analogous in different cultures, See Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros.*

113 Glassman, 429–430; Maria Eugenia Aubet: *The Phoenicians and the West,* Cambridge 2001, Cambridge University Press.

114 Glassman, 923–924.

115 Op. cit., 926–940.

116 Ernest Bornemann: *Das Patriarchat,* Frankfurt/Main 1975, Fischer Verlag, 204–205.

117 This depiction of a wife's way of life in Athens and the negative qualities attributed to women can be found among the ancient authors: Hesiod, Alexandros of Aphrodisias, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Euripides, Polemon, Menander and others, documenting their open misogyny, or hatred of women. See Bornemann, 104–106, 200; Glassman, 837–838, 1180–1184; Blundell, 113–140.

118 Glassman: Ibid.

119 Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy, Shapiro: *Women of the Classical World,* Oxford UK 1994, Oxford University Press, 163–182.

120 In a very interesting book, Ingrid Straube has proved that the Ionic philosophers (for ex., Thales, Hesiod, Anaximenes) and later classical philosophers (Socrates, Plato) drew on matriarchal cosmogony and philosophy. At the same time they perverted content, adapting it to patriarchal thought. See Ingrid Straube: *Die Quellen der Philosophie sind weiblich,* Aachen 2001, 2003, ein-Fach-verlag.

121 Mary Barnard: *Sappho,* New Haven, CT 2003, Yale University Press. Bella Vivante: *Daughters of Gaia,* Westport, CT 2007, Praeger Press.

122 See Fantham, et al.: *Women of the Classical World*; Barnard: *Sappho*; Vivante: *Daughters of Gaia*; Glassman, 1175–1177, 1183–1184, 1195–1215.

123 Blundell: *Women in Ancient Greece,* Chapter: "Hypatia of Alexandria". Maria Dzielska: *Hypatia of Alexandria,* Cambridge, MA 1995, Harvard University Press.

124 Report by Socrates of Constantinople, KG 7, 15.

125 This is evidenced by an important text in the Lemnian language and alphabetical writing on a grave stele (6th century).

126 Haarmann: *Geschichte der Sintflut,* 131, 132.

127 Op. cit., 133.

128 Op. cit., 134–135.—The origin of the spiral-twisted staff and that of the oracle reading is assumed to be Babylonian. Catholic bishops still carry the long, spiral crozier as a spiritual shepherd's crook today.

129 Alexander Baetz, in: *Die Zeit,* No. 53, Dec. 20, 2017, 18.

130 It is not at all certain whether it was a single ethnic group that emigrated or several ethnic groups that made up the "Etruscans," arriving in Central Italy together or at intervals. However, they all came from the Aegean region and shared a similar pre-Indo-European culture.

131 These local inhabitants had the Villanova culture, which is wrongly considered to be an early stage of the Etruscans. This is due to the hypothesis of the autochthonous origin of the Etruscan culture, claiming that the Etruscans took their urban culture only from the Romans. Such a claim turns the course of history upside-down.

132 This is reported in the legend of the "Rape of the Sabine women."

133 On this thesis, see Giovanni Feo: *Die Hohlwege der Etrusker. Die zyklopischen heiligen Gänge von Sovano, Sorano und Pitigliano,* Pitigliano 2007, Editrice Laurum, 5–10.

134 Jörg Gebauer: "Etrurien – Land und Geschichte," in: Exhibition catalog *Die Etrusker von Villanova bis Rom,* eds. J. Gebauer and F. S. Knauß, Munich 2015, Staatliche

Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, 15–19.

135 Leonie C. Koch: “Die Frauen von Veji – gegliederte Gesellschaft oder befreundete Gemeinschaft?” in: *Beyond Elites. Alternatives to Hierarchical Systems in Modelling Social Formations*, eds. T. L. Kienlin and A. Carpenter, Vol. 2, Bonn 2012, Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 483–508.

136 Baetz, in: *Die Zeit.*

137 Leonie Koch: “Die Frauen von Veji.”

138 Examples of such necropolises are Tarquinia (reconstructed), Cerveteri, Blera and San Cerbone. In the tuff rock area around Lake Bolsena (“Terra del Tufo”), necropolises have been carved into the rocks, such as Crocifisso del Tufo, Norchia, Tuscania, Sopraripa and San Rocco. I have visited several of these sites, as well as some Etruscan hollow paths.

139 These hollow paths (“vie cave”) are very narrow, and 10–25 m deep. Hollow paths with tombs in the rock walls can be found especially around Sovana, Sorano and Pitigliano. See G. Feo: *Die Hohlwege der Etrusker;* C. Rosati and C. Moroni: *The Etruscans and the Hollow Paths,* Grosseto, Italy 2013, Moroni Editore.

140 Only through Greek influence do motifs of fights appear in Etruscan art, but they depict mythological scenes and not real events.

141 She is depicted in a tomb painting from Tarquinia.

142 L. Bonfante: “Etruscan,” in: *Reading the Past,* ed. L. Bonfante, London 1990, British Museum Press, 321–378.

143 Gimbutas and Dexter: *The Living Goddess,* 166.

144 Gimbutas: *Civilization,* 347.—In this case, the inheritance of male titles apparently no longer passed from mother-brother via sister to sister-son, as is typical in matriarchal clans, because the Etruscans lived in individual marriages, although these were still interwoven within the matrilineal clan structure.

145 Ibid.; Gimbutas and Dexter, 166.

146 See Bornemann, 385–386, 388–389, 394, 412.

147 “Universe” derives from “Uni.”

148 This description of Etruscan society shows that the unsuitable comparative models widely used by researchers, such as the aristocratic society of Homer’s patriarchal world, let alone the patriarchal Romans, necessarily leads to distorted results. Such false analogies make the Etruscan culture just very “mysterious” because it is not understood. It is certainly more appropriate to compare it with the cultures from which it originated: the Old Aegean, especially the Minoan culture of Crete, as I have done here.

149 Gimbutas and Dexter, 167–170.

150 Christian Gliwitzky: “Aus Etruskern werden Römer,” in: Exhibition catalog *Die Etrusker von Villanova bis Rom,* 254– 258, 263–265.

151 By the term “original people” we refer to peoples with Neolithic roots and a Neolithic heritage.

152 Regula Frei-Stolba: “Die Räter in den antiken Quellen,” in: *Das Räterproblem in geschichtlicher, sprachlicher und archäologischer Sicht*, Chur, Switzerland 1984, Schriftenreihe des Rätisches Museums Chur, 11.

153 O. Menghin: “Die Räter in Tirol,” in: *Das Räterproblem,* 54–59. –This goddess also appears in a later form in the Rhaeto-Romanic Margaretha song; see Christian Caminada: “Das Rätoromanische St. Margaretha-Lied,” in: *Graubünden. Die verzauberten Täler. Die urgeschichtlichen Kulte und Bräuche im alten Rätien*, ed. Christian Caminada, Disentis 1992, Desertina Verlag.

154 Ernst Risch: “Die Räter als sprachliches Problem,” in: *Das Räterproblem,* 30.

155 Op. cit., 22–30.

156 Karl Felix Wolff: *The Dolomites and Their Legends*, transl. and ed. by Lea Rukavina, Bozen 2013, Raetia Verlag (original in German, Bozen 1930).—Wolff was the first to write down the myths of the Dolomites including the Fanes cycle. However, he romanticized and patriarchalized the Fanes myths, and thus distorted them considerably by his clichés regarding gender roles.

157 The matriarchal content of this cycle of myths was first recognized by Claire French-Wieser: "Das Reich der Fanes. Eine Tragödie des Mutterrechts," in: *Der Schlern*, Bozen 1975, Verlag Athesia; then scientifically elaborated by Ulrike Kindl: *Kritische Lektüre der Dolomitensagen von Karl Felix Wolff*, 2 Vols., San Martin de Tor, 1983, 1997, Institut Cultural Ladin. On this basis, it was adapted in a new, matriarchal version by Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Frau Holle. Das Feenvolk der Dolomiten*, Königstein/Taunus 2005, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, Part 2. See also the study of the mythological landscape of the Fanes cycle in the Dolomites in Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen*, 73–128.

158 Wolff: *Dolomitensagen*.

159 Klemens Ludwig: *Ethnische Minderheiten in Europa*, therein: "Die rätoromanischen Völker," Munich 1995, Beck Verlag, 75–80.

160 See Chapter 4 of the book in hand.

161 Ludwig: *Ethnische Minderheiten*, therein: "Die Sarden," 85, 87.

162 See for the number of seven thousand nuraghi: *Sardinien. Land der Türme*, eds. Bürge, Minoja, Reusser, Salis, Usai: Exhibition catalog of the University of Zurich, Zurich 2016, 4.

163 Examples are: Nuraghe Santu Antine in the "Valley of the Nuraghi"; Nuraghe di Su Rei; Nuraghe Arrubiu; Nuraghe Losa; complex of nuraghi Palmavera; complex of nuraghi Serra Orrios; Nuraghe of Tamuli in an ensemble of village, giant tomb and six menhirs; Su Nuraxi of Barumini with five large, interconnected towers (see Fig. 16).

164 *Sardinien*, 20–22, 120–121.

165 Op. cit., 54–56, 58.

166 Examples of well temples are: Su Tempiesu; Funtana Coberta; a particularly beautiful one is Santa Cristina. Op. cit., 42–43, 46–47, 76–77.

167 Op. cit., 70–72, 86–87. The 40 m deep sacred well was found in the Nuraghe San Antine.

168 Op. cit., 100–101, 111, 112, 122.

169 Op. cit., 28.

170 See "La leggenda di Norace" (in Sardinian: "Sa fabula de Noraxi"), in: F. Enna: *Miti, Leggende e Fiabe*, 84–85.

171 *Sardinien*, 32–33, 83.

172 This is also reported by the Sardinian legend mentioned above, that people built stone houses and fortified the nuraghi to protect themselves against barbaric raids from the sea, which are described very dramatically. See Enna, 82–83, 84–85

173 G. Lilliu and R. Zucca: *Su Nuraxi di Barumini*, in the series: *The Archaeological Sardinia*, guide No. 9, Sassari, Sardinia 1994, Carlo Delfino, 53.

174 *Sardinien*, 115, 122–125.

175 More than 15 sites with relics from Mycenae exist, most of them on the southern tip of Sardinia (Nuraghe Antigori), but also inland (village and Nuraghe Barumini). See Op. cit., 90; Lilliu and Zucca, 54.

176 For instance, Tuppedili with 10 ha; see *Sardinia*, 40; on the extensive trading network, see Lilliu and Zucca, 90–95, 106.

177 Lilliu and Zucca, 99–100.

178 Ludwig, 86–89. The old matriarchal heritage can still be seen in Sardinian men today, as they have huge respect for the mother of the family and no Italian “macho” attitude towards women.

179 See, for ex., Michel Lamy: *Histoire Secrète du Pays Basque,* Paris 1980, Edition Albin Michel, 27, 29, 51–53.

180 Many Basque megalithic buildings of smaller size can be found in the Pyrenees, such as dolmens, menhirs, and stone circles, and these are particularly beautiful on the Plateau de Bénou (in the Montagnes d’Ossau).

181 Isaure Gratacos: *Femmes Pyrénéennes*, Toulouse 1987, Editions Privat, 63, 64.

182 Lamy, 23–26. The Basque language is only preserved in the western part of the Pyrenees, but Basque traditions are still strong even in the central Pyrenees.

183 Op. cit., 22.

184 Op. cit., 80–82; Gimbutas and Dexter, 173–174.

185 José Miguel de Barandiarán: “Diccionario illustrado de mitologia vasca,” in: *Obras completas, Eusko folklore,* Vol. I, *La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca,* Bilbao 1972; José Miguel de Barandiarán: “La religion des anciens basques,” in: *Obras completas, Eusko folklore,* Vol. II, *La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca*, Bilbao 1973; publication in English: José Miguel de Barandiarán: *Selected writings of José Miguel de Barandiaran. Basque prehistory and ethnography,* ed. Jesús Altuna, Reno, Nev., 2007, Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada.

186 Gimbutas and Dexter: Ibid.—These characteristics of Mari refer us back to the central European Great Goddess Frau Holle (Mother Hulda) and reveal her ancient, pre-Indo-European roots. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Frau Holle.*

187 Such dangerous rituals also existed in other ancient cultures, having the same meaning of a sacrifice to deities.

188 Robert Graves had already pointed this out.

189 “Laminak” is the Basque word, while “hadas/fadas” is a Romanization that goes back to “fatas” (see “Fata Morgana” for “Fairy Morgane”). In Old English it is “faye,” in Germanic “Fee.”

190 Gratacos, 25–40, 42–48, 57–59.

191 On this topic see also Heide Goettner-Abendroth: “Die ‚Witten Wiver‘ von Rügen,” in: Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie,* 33–56.

192 Gratacos, 53–54.—The shepherdess Bernadette Soubirous (14) had a vision of a “Dama blanca” (February 1858) in the Lourdes Grotto, which she always described as smiling, charitable and small, meaning she was a “hada” (fairy). Bernadette spoke a Basque dialect and did not understand French, so when she was questioned by the Church, the “Virgin Mary” (with the dogma of the “Immaculate Conception”) was put into her mouth, although she was not familiar with these terms at all. However, the Church took advantage of this situation for its missionary work, and soon afterward Bernadette was locked up in a nunnery, just in case. This method of a late Christianization has occurred several times in the Pyrenees and Alps. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen*, 153–155.

193 Gratacos, 78–85, 89–92, 99–104, 129–138. –Isaure Gratacos, herself a Basque woman, has gathered all these facts about social order and other issues in her excellent, scholarly field research.

194 Op. cit., 145–146.

195 Quoted in Gratacos, 94.

196 Op. cit., 79.

197 Op. cit., 85–87.

8

Bronze Age and Iron Age in Europe North of the Alps: Matriarchal Elements in Patriarchal Surroundings

Chronology

Late 3rd mill. to mid-2nd mill. (2,200–1,600 BCE):	Early Bronze Age in Central Europe
Mid to late 2nd mill. (1,600–1,300 BCE):	Middle Bronze Age in Central Europe
Late 2nd mill. to 1st millennium (1,300–800 BCE):	Late Bronze Age in Central Europe, Celts
8th to 5th century (800–450 BCE):	Early Iron Age in Central Europe, Celtic Hallstatt culture
5th century to 0 (450–0 CE):	Pre-Roman Iron Age in Central Europe, Celtic La Tène culture
Mid-2nd to 1st millennium (1,660–700 BCE):	Bronze Age on the British Isles
7th to 1st century (650–55 BCE):	Iron Age on the British Isles, Celtic islanders
Mid to late 2nd mill. (1,500–1,000 BCE):	Bronze Age in Northern Europe, Germanic peoples
1st millennium (from 1,000 BCE):	Iron Age in Northern Europe, Germanic peoples
5th to 1st century (500–100 BCE):	Southerly migration and settlement of Germanic peoples in Central Europe
Early 1st century CE (9 CE):	Victory of the Germanic peoples over the Romans (Battle of the Teutobourg Forest)
3rd century CE (from 260 CE):	Destruction of the Roman “Limes” and Germanic settlements in the Roman Empire
4th century to 6th century CE (from 375 CE):	“Migration Period” and the fall of the Roman Empire

Precarious Domination in the Bronze Age

While development in Southern Europe was marked by seafaring peoples, in Europe north of the Alps it was mounted nomads with cattle who left their imprint on Bronze Age cultures. Their invasions at the end of the 3rd millennium (Early Bronze Age) were the crucial event that affected the matriarchal people living in the area after all matriarchal cultures had been destroyed in Southeast Europe. At the same time, marriages with the pre-Indo-European local women were prevailing, for the groups of male invaders were dependent on offspring. In the first generation, such marriages occurred via rape and coercion, this being somewhat mitigated in the following generations as the women were now the conquerors’ own daughters. Nevertheless, women had become bartering objects between men.

In spite of the early patriarchal social order, however, the influence of women increased, resulting in a kind of “mixed culture.” At first, keeping of cattle was limited and the Indo-Europeans took up agriculture, which they learned from the native women. Men were now doing less and less of the “men’s work” as herders, and so they took over the farming. They used oxen and horses as draft and plough animals and turned this into a new kind of “men’s work” with a patriarchal touch.[1] For now the old principle of common ownership was abolished, and land was turned into individual property, as had previously been customary with livestock. This private property could only be inherited by the sons. Women ←440 | 441→were restricted to in-house activities where they could best be controlled.[2] Here they devoted their time, as ever, not only to weaving, but also to pottery because the ceramics—whose sherds are used by archaeologists to determine cultures—originate from them. They produced all types of pottery, even though the high ceramic art of the Neolithic cultures had long since been lost.

In line with these cultural changes, the Indo-European language also changed. Many terms for farming were taken from the native peoples, as well as for the female arts practiced by the new wives. From these genetic, cultural, and linguistic changes, the typical “mixed societies” of Archer culture people and Battle-ax culture people with their special dialects developed over the course of centuries. The cultures and languages of the Celtic, Germanic and Slavonic peoples emerged from these later.[3]

Some scholars believe that the marauding Indo-European male hordes were “pacified” by the local women through these long-lasting processes.[4] This may well be true, since women are more likely to provide a quiet lifestyle, in both personal and cultural terms, because they are responsible for young children as mothers. Their new imprisonment in patriarchal families, however, did not seem to please all women. Other researchers, to their astonishment, have found that women were extremely mobile in the Early Bronze Age (2,200–1,600), something which they cannot explain. They suppose that women traveled hundreds of miles to find “husbands” far away. However, it might be the case that they were fleeing from their husbands in forced marriages! Women did not only move away individually. In some settlements, it has been found that two thirds of the women originally came from somewhere else.[5] They chose to settle in these villages, and probably never married again, given that no children of theirs can be identified. However, they were fully integrated into the communities of their choice, for their burials were no different from the others.[6]—This points to egalitarian patterns in such social groups that had escaped the invasions, or had not yet ←441 | 442→been affected by them, presenting pre-Indo-European characteristics as women were considered equal. Therefore, it is not surprising that the women liked it better here. This search for areas that offered them a life acceptable to them was probably the primary reason for many women migrating across Central Europe. Their mobility considerably accelerated cultural interchange in the Early Bronze Age because they brought new commodities and knowledge with them. Over a period of several centuries this developed into the institution of traveling tradeswomen, since women in patriarchal societies had no possessions at all and could not inherit anything. The men, on the other hand, remained tied to the place that offered them their new settled lifestyle, since arable land and cattle now belonged to them alone.

Such regions with pre-Indo-European matriarchal patterns continued to exist in western and northern Europe for a long time, because the influence of cattle nomads had only been superficial. In the Early Bronze Age, neither the Indo-European strongholds with their associated farm-houses nor bronze were represented everywhere, but limited to a few individual locations.[7] Many areas had not been involved in patriarchalization, so the cultural situation was still very open. The strongholds, in the form of compact hilltop settlements surrounded by massive walls and with fortified gates, were by no means found everywhere, and spread only slowly from Southeast to Central Europe.[8] Their purpose was to displace the native peoples and to continuously take over their land in as yet unoccupied regions. However, these individual hilltop settlements of local warrior chiefs only lasted a short time; in other words, their approach to territorial control and hierarchy was short-term, and power relations were very unstable. People generally lived in troubled times. Any lasting effect of these new “elites” cannot be discerned, because complex patterns of domination did not develop and consolidate.

Neither did a strictly stratified society of warriors, craftsmen, and farmers arise—as is often assumed. Except for the forging of weapons, crafts remained more of a sideline for the farmers, and a warrior society with organized military and fixed battle units did not yet exist. Daggers as weapons have also been found in women’s graves and women obviously knew how to defend themselves, which at least made sense for the traveling tradeswomen. In general, bronze weapons were only sometimes used for fighting. In part they were pure symbols of prestige, polished to a high gloss. This is also supported by the frequent buried hoards of such “weapons.” Such a hoard of five bronze dagger-axes, extremely rare ceremonial weapons, was found on the Bavarian Danube, along with a long bronze sword and dagger, a needle and tweezers (around 1,800 BCE).[9] These are not “grave goods for warriors,” as sometimes assumed, because these often-substantial hoards cannot be regarded as graves. Furthermore, one does not bury weapons that might be urgently needed to maintain one’s position of power. Being objects of prestige and pomp, they had a different function, similar to that of the bronze culture of Sardinia, where long bronze swords were placed in sanctuaries as votive offerings to the deities.[10] In the Europe north of the Alps, due to a lack of temples, this was carried out at sacred sites in the countryside. The prestige conferred by these objects was offered to the deity, or returned to the earth, probably with a prayer for a blessing from the divine power. Thus, this epoch was not an age of warlike heroes competing with their armies for prestige, power and wealth—the organizational structures were too simple and not durable enough for that.[11]

In the Middle Bronze Age (1,600–1,300) almost all hilltop strongholds were abandoned. Scattered settlements of farms took over, depending on a subsistence economy, without surplus-production for any chieftain centers. This points to renewed egalitarian patterns—however, only among men who owned the farms, because, at the same time, the early patriarchal family relationships had consolidated internally. Each region was now on its own cultural path; uniformity disintegrated, and hardly any bonds remained with either near or distant neighbors. This indicates that, in the Early Bronze Age, it had been easier for warrior chiefs to slaughter foreign, defenseless peoples than it was now to rule their own people. Instead, they maintained long-distance relations, and devoted themselves to trading metal.[12] In general, this was a calmer period. The land grab had progressed so far that the invaders now felt safe, and they no longer needed to live behind walls. In any case, due to the growing population, living conditions had become too cramped within the walls.

←443 | 444→This situation changed in the Late Bronze Age, in all areas of society (1,300–800). Not only was bronze now widely available, and used in many types of objects in everyday life, but the construction of walled hill fort settlements restarted, more than ever before. By the Late Bronze Age these had spread extensively. They were no longer narrow strongholds, but large, well-organized villages on hills, mountains, and at the water’s edge, and a much larger number of people lived in these settlements than before. This concentration was due to two reasons: a new change in climate affected large parts of Europe, which became drier and warmer so that settlements were relocated along river courses, merging into large villages.[13] In order to organize, and lead these crowded groups of people, the techniques used to dominate were developed further, that is, the warrior profession was strongly cultivated as a means of enforcement.

The tribes in Central Europe who built such hill forts from 1,300 onwards were the *Early Celts,* and this type of architecture is characteristic of them. Their ancestors had been living there since the last wave of Indo-European immigration. However, only now did they appear culturally independent as Celts, being documented even later, in the Early Iron Age, through the records of authors of antiquity. These described them as tall, often red-haired people with colorful clothing, and good weapons. They were also regarded to be quarrelsome, intemperate and arrogant, because they always wanted to take on more than one person in a duel. But among them, the warriors now obeyed a strict, hierarchical order, imposed by their chiefs.

The formation of *Celtic culture* in the Late Bronze Age brought about a change in burial customs. The corpses of warrior chiefs were still interred under mounds, while ordinary people were incinerated and interred in urns in large cemeteries, without any burial objects. This time is therefore called the “Urnfield Period.”[14] Thus a sharp division of society into two strata now became apparent, a ruling class and a peasant class. This was accompanied by a drastic change in religious ideas, for people’s bodily appearance in the here and now vanished upon them being burned. People no longer believed in a bodily continuation of life in a beautiful Otherworld, but solely in an underworld of pale, faceless shadows. This is the characteristically Indo-European concept of death.

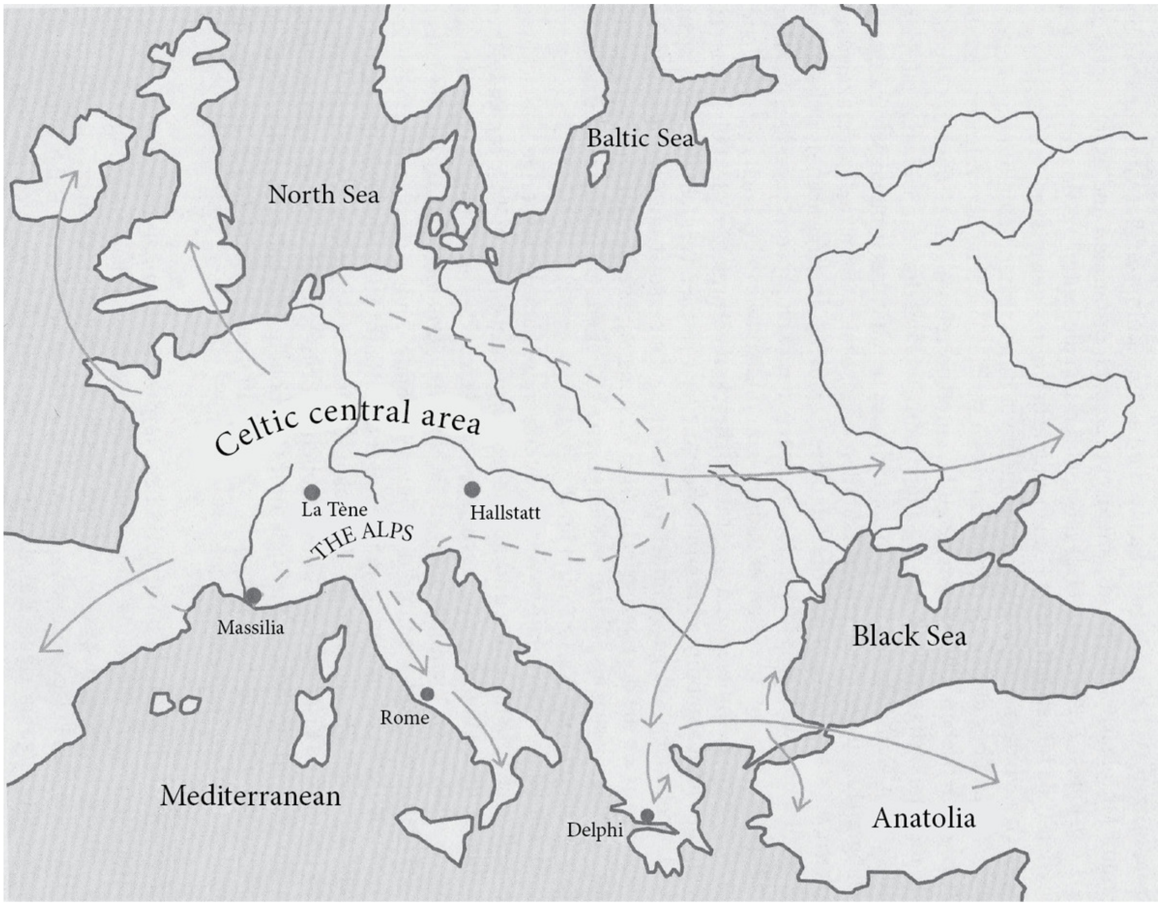
←444 | 445→Generally, however, we should note at this point that the archaeological finds from the Bronze Age do not suggest very warlike conditions with frequent massacres. Indeed, the former native peoples who were not warlike and mostly not armed had been displaced, so the gleaming helmets, shields and lances were rather showpieces and protective armament. Only in the Iron Age, when warrior tribes fought against other warrior tribes, did the situation change dramatically.

The Celtic Peoples and the Question of Matriarchy

The Iron Age Empires of the Celts

The new period of drought affected not only Central Europe, but even more so the steppes, bringing renewed unrest from the east. Once again, warlike mounted nomads arrived in Europe and settled in the Hungarian lowlands. This time it was the Germanic Cimmerians who were displaced from the Black Sea steppe by the Scythians, invading Southeast Europe as a result. Threatened by them, the farmers in the Carpathian Basin (Hungary) moved their settlements to higher altitudes in the mountains, in search of protection from the nomads.[15] But now these invading mounted warriors were armed with iron weapons, representing a threat to all bordering Central European territories. This is when the Iron Age began, a restless epoch with a steady increase in violence. Iron weapons spread rapidly via imports, imitation and finally own production, being found in large parts of Europe as offensive weapons from the 8th century onwards (Early Iron Age 8th-6th century). Lances and dual-edged swords were now used from horseback and employed ruthlessly. The archaeological finds now show a dramatic increase in severe injuries from sword thrusts to male skeletons.

In addition, in the 7th-6th centuries, the Scythians, mounted nomads, invaded Hungary in turn, carrying out their well-organized attacks as far as Central Europe (southeastern Alps, West Poland).[16] However, the Celts were able to repel them. In the meantime, they had developed the Iron Age Hallstatt culture, with a strict social hierarchy and a powerful warrior caste that used chariots in highly mobile groups, led by warlords worthy of the name. The power of these warlords grew significantly, but their own people no longer thought about resisting them, or the centralization this entailed, because of the constant threat from the east. The centers of the Hallstatt culture (800–450) were located in Bohemia, Austria, South Germany, and East France, with a wide reach to the west (Map 11). Hill forts grew into “oppida,” small towns that were later also moved to the plains (urbanization). Now the regional warlords ruled over their tribal members and established an organization of limited states. Most of these oppida were located along the commercial routes where metals and salt were traded, as well as exotic luxuries which the dominant class kept for itself.[17] Salt in particular made them rich; its use in metallurgy increased the demand, and salt eventually became the yardstick of value.[18] The wealth of the ruling class can be seen in the gorgeous furnishings of the tombs for princes and certain high-ranking women, which are called "state-tombs."


Baltic Sea
North Sea
Celtic central area
La Tène
Hallstatt
THE ALPS
Massilia
Black Sea
Rome
Mediterranean
Delphi
Anatolia

Map 11: The spreading of the Celtic peoples in Europe

←446 | 447→In the Middle Iron Age, the second great Celtic culture, La Tène (450–0), spread throughout Europe. Its center was located further west between the rivers Marne and Rhine, for in the meantime Germanic tribes had aggressively invaded the Celtic region from the northeast, pushing the Celts westwards. The Rhône was a very important trade route, connecting the Celts with the Greek colony of Massilia (Marseilles), so the river also played a major role in their westward displacement. However, the Celts did not rest with being displaced; their warlords now actively extended their domain further. The reason for this was not only a lack of land due to the constantly growing population—the Celts were the largest ethnic group in Europe at that time—but to a greater extent the intense competition among their rulers and their hunger for power. Thus, they constantly waged war and conquest throughout Central and Northwest Europe. As a result, the La Tène culture finally extended from Hungary over the whole of Central Europe to North Spain, as well as to Britain and Ireland (see Map 11).[19] Everywhere they went, the Celts mixed with the native inhabitants, taking local women as their wives in the familiar, violent way.

However, even southern Europe was not safe from them. Celtic armies, hungry for booty, crossed the Alps to Italy, where they overran the Po Valley and expelled the Etruscans. Wherever they appeared, they triggered the "Tumultus Gallicus," the panicky mobilization of all city dwellers. In the year 390 BCE they plundered Rome, a deed by which they stepped finally into the light of historiography. They reached as far as the Greeks in South Italy, as well as the Thracians and Dacians in the east, where they served as mercenaries. They were uncomfortable guests for these foreign cultures, who wanted to get rid of them. Thus, these Celtic armies marauded on alone, eastwards to the Don in South Russia, and southwards to Greece, which they invaded in 279 BCE, spreading fear and terror. At Delphi, however, whose sanctuary they plundered, they were crushed by the Greeks. The surviving warriors founded a robber state on the Black Sea, and from there they used to raid the nearby Greek coastal cities. Others entered service as mercenaries in Asia Minor and settled permanently in Anatolia (Galatians) (see Map 11).[20]

In the last few decades before the year zero, the gradual evolution of the Celts towards urbanization and forming states came to a sudden end.

Their neighbors, whom they had terrorized long enough, moved against them, independently from each other and from different directions: the Germanic tribes from the east, the Dacians and Thracians from the southeast, and the Romans from the south. Julius Caesar conquered Gaul (France), and the Germanic tribes occupied the ←447 | 448→ other half of Central Europe (Germany, and the countries up to the North Sea, South Poland, Austria, and Switzerland). The Romans had a superior warfare technique and were considerably more skilled at ruling than the Celts, so they finally conquered the Celts and subjected them to their supremacy. As a result, the Celts—like all peoples in the Roman Empire—were systematically romanized in terms of their language, legislation, and social structure.[21]

The fate of the Celts took a different turn on the British Isles, in the Atlantic northwest of Europe. A great Neolithic history had already developed in these countries before the Celts arrived, with unique megalithic structures, such as Stonehenge, Avebury Henge, and Silbury Hill in South England, and New Grange in Ireland. The Atlantic megalithic culture originated on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain, Portugal), and developed with an extraordinary richness of forms across Brittany (France) and up to the northern Scottish islands (5th-3rd millennium).[22] The matriarchal people of this culture had arrived by ship, the fastest and most comfortable means of transport at the time. Not only did they spread the art of megalithic architecture everywhere, but also their belief in goddesses and fairies. Similar myths can be found along their entire Atlantic route, from southwestern to northwestern Europe, and also in northern Europe from the North Sea coasts via Jutland (Denmark) and southern Sweden to the coasts of the Baltic Sea. Here we find references to ships everywhere: in myths, symbols, and pictures that had not only a practical, but also a symbolic and religious meaning.

The importance of the ship is obvious for these coastal regions and island countries, as well as for the Indo-European culture arriving later. Here, the Indo-Europeans adopted seafaring. Although they did not develop maritime cultures, such as those of the Mediterranean and the

Atlantic coasts, the ship gave their culture a special aspect here, distinguishing it from the continental Indo-European cultures. When the first Celts arrived in the British Isles in the Late Bronze Age (from 1,300 BCE) (see Map 11) and became the first *Island Celts*, bringing with them the custom of cremation burials (Urnfield culture), they surrounded each urn grave with flat stones in the shape of ships. This symbolized the journey of the deceased to the Otherworld. Such “ship graves” were then also adopted in North Europe, they can be found from Sweden to Latvia at the Baltic Sea.[23] Nevertheless, it took until 700 before bronze and cremation burials became established in the British Isles.

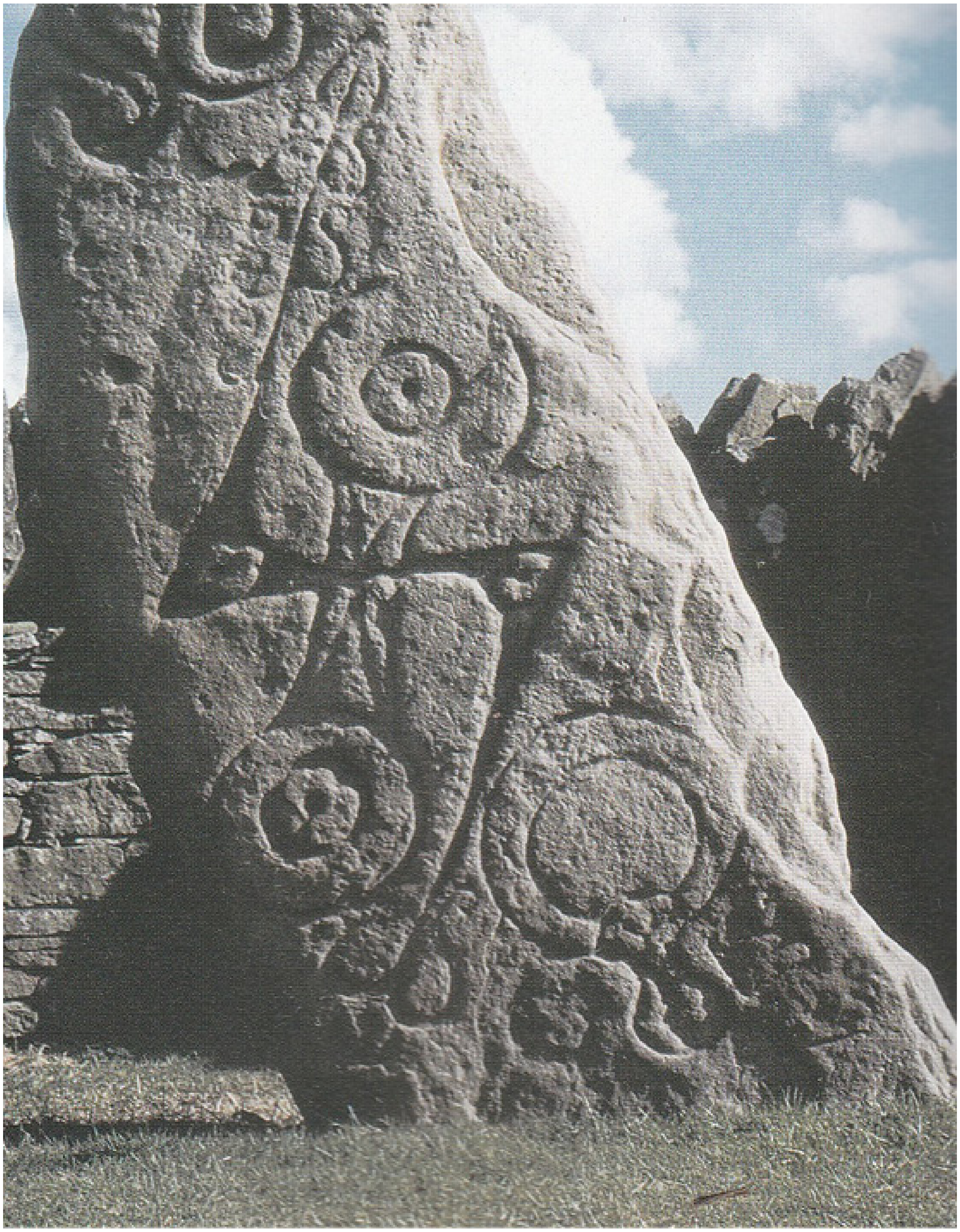
←448 | 449→

However, iron swords, which appeared in England and spread very quickly, soon announced the sudden arrival of warlike Iron Age Hallstatt Celts (from 650). This resulted in the dramatic collapse, and rapid end, for the local bronze industry.[24] Numerous fortifications were now built in South and Central England, such as fortresses, and oppida surrounded by ramparts. These strongholds seemed necessary to the Hallstatt lords since war, which they had brought with them, was now omnipresent in the Celtic world. They were of little use, however, because other Celts had pushed their way in by the 4th century. From the 3rd century onwards, the La Tène warlords took over the Island Celtic civilization.[25] All these invaders were different groups from the Celtic upper classes on the continent. They preferred to live on the coast, while the pre-Indo-European tribes in the interior of Britain and Ireland continued with their traditional, matriarchal social order for a long time.

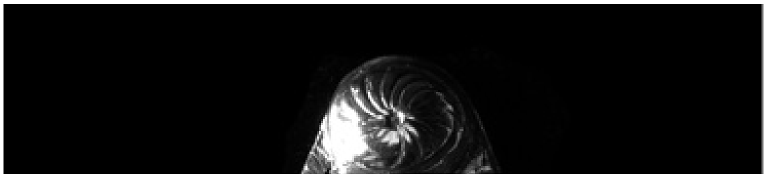
Nevertheless, during the Iron Age, the Island Celts were not spared conquest by the Roman military machine. With the Romans, war became a permanent condition throughout Europe. After Julius Caesar subjugated Gaul, the way to Britain was open to them. The British were to be “punished” for supporting the Gauls, but of course the Roman military empire also had other reasons, since it thrived by exploiting its subjugated countries. The Celtic warlords put up a brave but futile resistance. Even the Celtic queen Boadicea/Boudicca did not benefit from surprising the Romans with the unusual sight of a female warlord leading the British tribes. She unleashed a massive uprising against the Romans, which ended catastrophically (61 CE).[26] Finally, the Roman armies succeeded in conquering two-thirds of Britain. They built Hadrian's Wall across the island from east to west, as protection against the Scottish "barbarians" from the north—since walls are a tried and tested means of securing power in patriarchal history. Scotland and Ireland never fell under Roman occupation and were the countries that preserved their pre-Celtic and Celtic traditions most strongly.[27]

Matriarchal Picts and Patriarchal Celts: The Problematic Position of Women

The native pre-Indo-European people of Britain and Ireland were the Picts. The Romans of the Iron Age called them "Picts" because they painted themselves, but the name they gave themselves is unknown.[28] Long before the arrival of the first Indo-Europeans, and later the Celts, these large islands were the lands of the Picts. They are said to descend from the legendary "Túatha Dé Danann," the "People of the (Goddess) Dana." Here we can see the seafaring bearers of the Atlantic megalithic culture, with their matriarchal social order in the British Isles (Fig. 1 a, b). As descendants of the Túatha Dé Danann, the Picts had the same social order, and their original goddess was also Dana, called Danu in Ireland and Dôn in Wales.[29] Away from the coast, where the Picts had retreated from the first Celts after the latter had landed, they were able follow their own culture, undisturbed by the Celts, for a very long time.



ig. 1a: Menhir of the Picts with symbols, Aberlemno, Tyside Scotland)



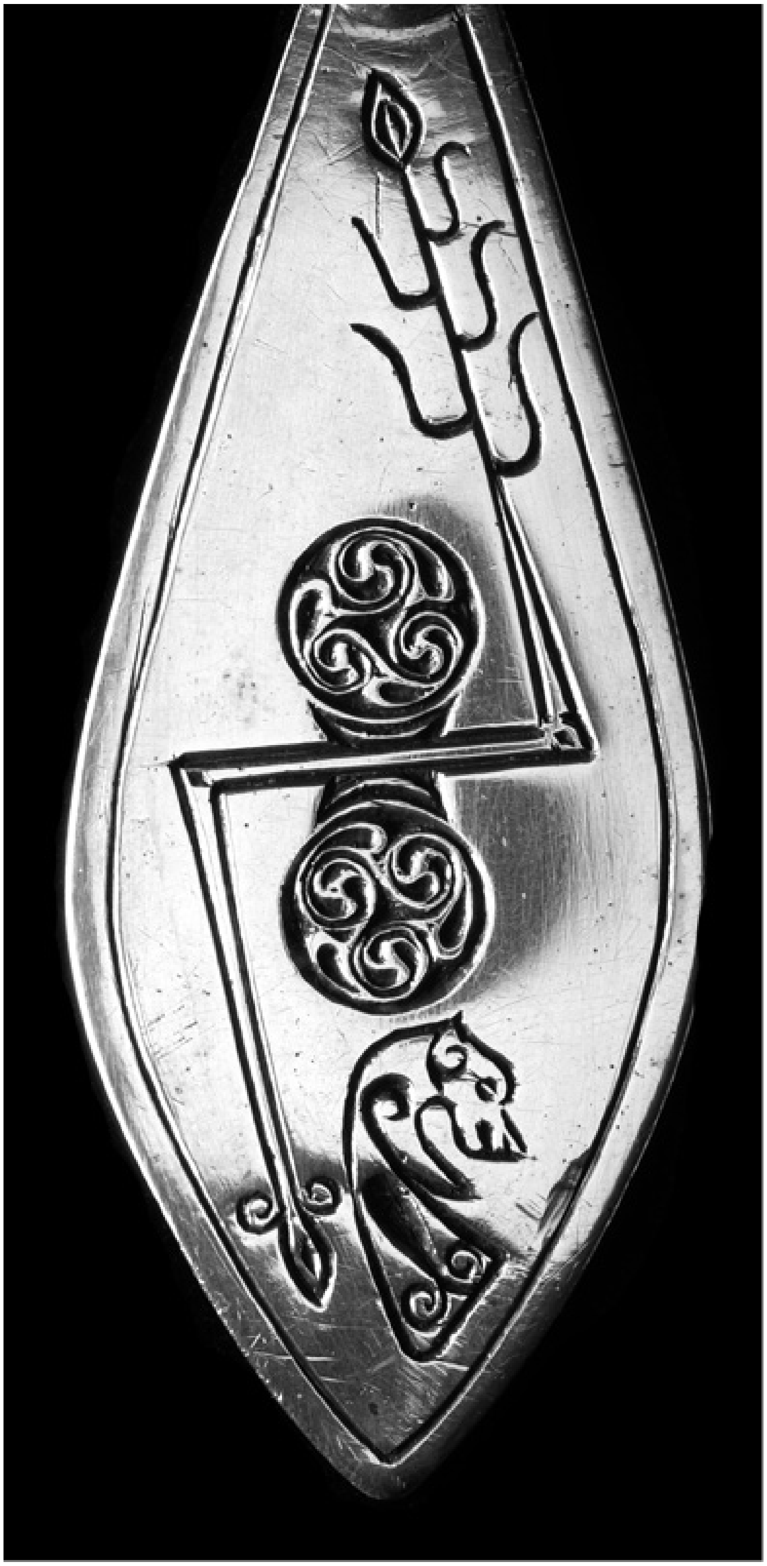


Fig. 1b: Silver gem of the Picts displaying the same symbols: zigzag line and double disc, Norrie’s Law Hoard, Fife (Scotland) (National

Museum, Scotland)

But the next waves of increasingly warlike Celts displaced them more and more to the west and north. This forced the Picts to acquire the military equipment of the conquerors, namely horses and weapons, and they eventually became skilled fighters in their own defense. Only at the end of the 1st century CE, they were subjugated and Celticized in spite of their heroic resistance in England, the same thing happening even later in Ireland, in the 4th century CE. Pict women also took part in this long-lasting resistance, with the legends speaking of religious secret societies of Amazonian-like women, who fought against the Celts with weapons and magic.[30] Resulting from this subjugation, many Picts ←451 | 452→ emigrated to Scotland, where they founded kingdoms as “Maiates,” the southern Picts, and as “Caledonians,” the northern Picts. They continued to defend their last “Caledonian” realms in East Scotland for a long time, building numerous defense towers. They erected these circular protective towers, called “brochs,” close to their settlements, which were also made up of circular houses, so the inhabitants could retreat into the towers in the case of emergency (Fig. 2). These brochs therefore served the same function as the nuraghi in Sardinia in their late construction phase. Remains of them are still quite common in Northeast Scotland and on the Orkney and Shetland Islands, the most remote areas to which the Picts retreated. It was not until the 9th century CE that the last Pict realm was destroyed by the invading Celtic Scots.[31]

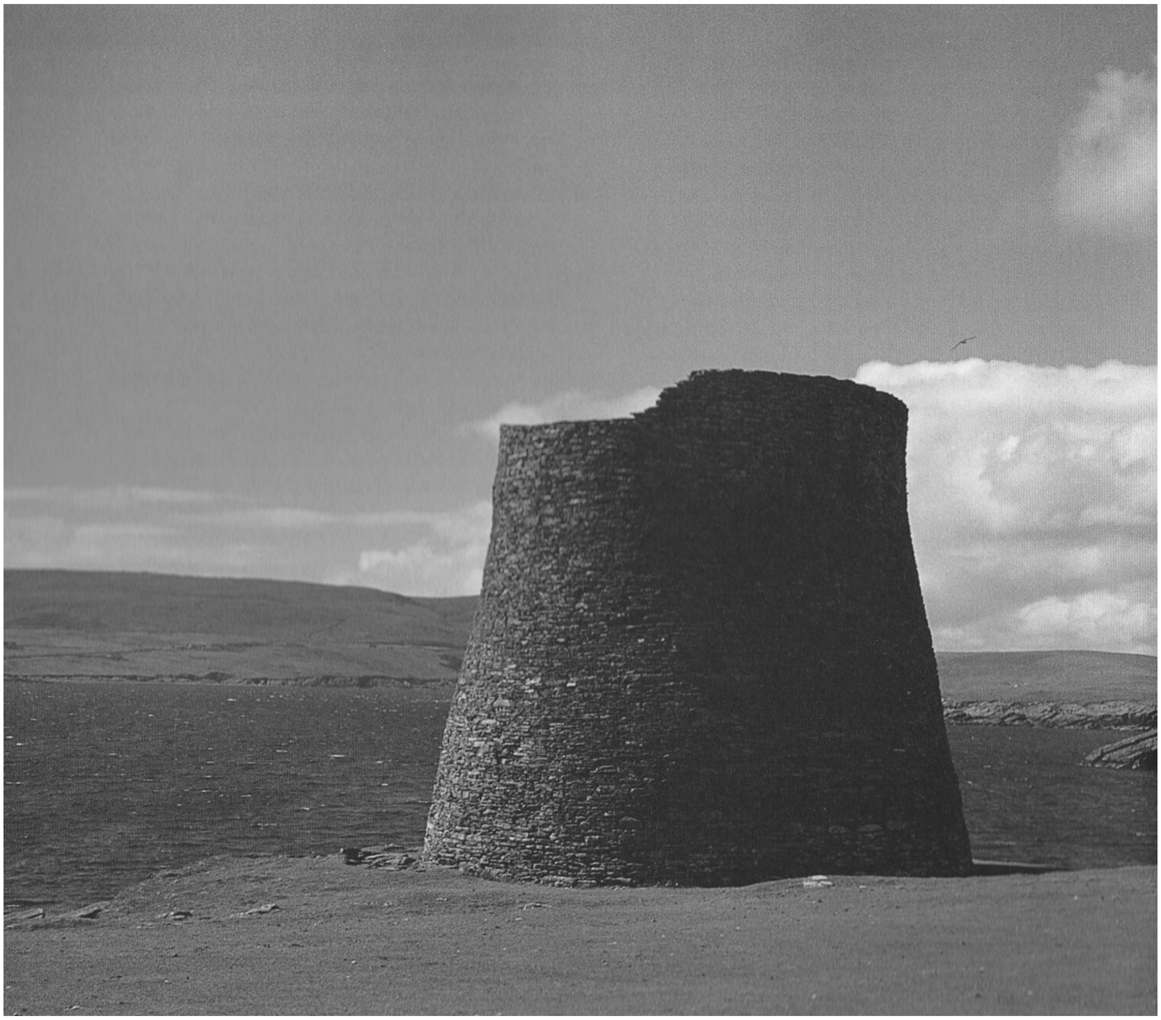


Fig. 2: The defensive tower (Broch) of Mousa, Shetland Islands (Scotland)

Pict society was based fully on matrilinearity, even after they had been missionized by early Irish Christianity. Matrilinearity was evident not only with their kings, where succession to the throne passed from mother's brother to sister's son, ←452 | 453→but in society as a whole. Evidence for this is that there were no fixed marriages, and that sexuality was free—circumstances which are attested to in the Latin sources, with highly disparaging judgments. Since every patriarchal society is based on the power of the father and strict monogamy for the wife due to the insecurity of the father line, it was considered a provocation that this did not hold for the Picts. There were complaints that not even the Pictish kings could "hope to have children of their own"—meaning children along the father line. For the Picts, this was not necessary, since the children belonged to the mother's clan anyway. They were raised together in these clans, because the Picts are said to have owned everything as a community and to have lived in a kind of "democracy," before they established kingdoms.[32] Pictish matrilinearity is still reflected in the Old Irish mythological literature, where deified persons and heroes are named after their mother and not their father. For example, Gwyddyon and Arianrhod are called "Son and Daughter of Dôn," the hero Cuchulainn is called "Son of Deichtire," and King Conchobor "Son of Ness"—with Dôn, Deichtire and Ness all being the mother.[33] This continues in the mythological literature of Old Britain. For example, the successor to the throne of King Mark of Cornwall is his sister's son, Tristan; no mention is ever made of a son of King Mark. The same applies to the mythical figure of King Arthur or Artus, whose cycle of legends is of much older origin than the late Christian, historicizing re-interpretation claims. He is surrounded by his sisters' sons, who serve him, and his "nephew" Gawain is marked out as the successor to the throne.[34]

All this is related to the culture of the Picts, but not to that of the Celts. The frequently asserted "Celtic matriarchy" is therefore invalid, because it never actually existed. In the long history of the subjugation of the Pict tribes, Celtic patriarchy, however, suddenly came across an ancient matriarchy of Neolithic origin. For the groups of Celtic warriors, it was also necessary to become involved ←453 | 454→ with Pictish women, even if this was rarely desired by the females themselves.[35] In this way, some matriarchal elements found their way into Celtic society, and the more the Celts moved away from the continent, the greater the influence of Pictish patterns, such as in Ireland and Scotland, these being the outermost Celtic regions. For example, in France, which had become much more Indo-European, Gaulish women did not enjoy as many rights as the Celtic women on the British Isles, and there the Irish and Scottish women were in the best position. Great things have been said about these Celtic Islander women: for instance, the emergence of powerful queen mothers who determined the succession to the throne; of reigning queens who even led armies after the death of their husbands, such as Boadicea; and of women as influential arbitrators and priestesses. However, these occurrences remained limited to the British Isles, and they are few exceptions from the ruling class.[36] Problems started to arise when priestesses acting as oracles concerning war and peace, to which much attention was paid, erred with their predictions, or when a famine or epidemic broke out. Then they were blamed for this, perceived as harmful “witches,” beheaded and their heads thrown out of the tribe’s land—by no means a matriarchal act![37]

Nor was the lot of ordinary Celtic women in any way wonderful. They were excluded from all politics. The decisions were taken at the assembly of warriors, where women were not allowed. Their lot was to marry, have children, and keep house, because, as everywhere in patriarchy, Celtic women were obliged to secure the father line. The wife’s position depended on whether and how much property she brought into the marriage, “property” usually meaning livestock. The best situation for a woman was when she could bring more property into the marriage than the man. He was then considered a “serving man,” because the wife became the head of the family. Celtic women had the right to dispose of their property themselves, even when married. Their property never became that of the spouse (there was a strict separation of ownership), so this could certainly give women a strong position. The catch, however, was that such marriages were very rare, and limited to the upper class. In a normal marriage, both partners were meant to contribute the same amount of property. Here, too, the wife had full ownership ←454 | 455→rights and a certain legal capacity over her own part. Roman historians considered this to be outrageous, wildly exaggerating Celtic customs in their written records. However, there was also a catch in this “equality” of the wife, because daughters were never allowed to inherit land from their fathers. They were also further disadvantaged by the law of succession, inheriting only half of what the sons received. As a result, wives usually brought less property to a marriage than men, and this meant a certain dependency for them, even if they were allowed to keep their dowry.[38] This was the general situation—in spite of people often waxing lyrical about the "high status of Celtic women."

For other reasons, too, the situation of the ordinary wife was not particularly fortunate, even when she was considered the legal "woman of the house." The husband could choose legally recognized "second wives" as concubines, whom he acquired by contract. Such a contract, however, was only valid for one year, in order not to let the concubine become the husband's property. Nevertheless, he could quite legally take on a different concubine every year, which resulted in a kind of polygyny.[39] In no way was the wife allowed to do the same with "second husbands." Instead, she had to willingly accept the husband's concubine as help in the household. If the situation went too far, or the concubine insulted her, she was allowed to kill her out of "legitimate jealousy," without being punished. However, the husband was able to take a new concubine the following year with full rights—which did not improve the wife's situation. In this sense, an old Celtic proverb says: "The woman of the house sheds three drops: a drop of blood, a drop of tears, and a drop of sweat."[40]

Divorce was common for such reasons, and on both sides, even though women were economically in the worse position. It was easier for the husband to repudiate his wife without reason, a right which the wife did not enjoy. The rejected wife was not allowed to marry again until the husband had entered into a second marriage, because before that he could "take her back" at any time. This provides evidence of the old Indo-European sense of a man's ownership of women, and makes the "freedom" of the Celtic woman quite relative.[41] The position of the Celtic wife can be seen to be highly ambivalent, and another variation of patriarchal social patterns. However, compared with the early Indo-European conditions in Europe, of which an Irish proverb says: "Slave has been the name for women," these later legal regulations do represent an improvement.[42] They are probably due to the influence of wives from the Picts and other pre-Indo-European peoples, which the Celts inevitably encountered during their conquests.

Celtic Gods and Goddesses: A Split Religion

Matriarchal elements in Celtic cultures are most likely to be found in the religious sphere. However, the typical split in religiosity in patriarchal societies, which produces a dominant culture and a culture of the oppressed, must be taken into consideration. The upper classes of warlords and warriors worshiped the Indo-European gods of the sky and war, and only the ancestors along the male line, rather than female ancestors. The age-old religion of rebirth, in which the woman is important, disappeared, and was replaced by the weird underworld of no return. Beautiful conceptions of the Otherworld, such as paradises on islands, or at the bottom of the sea, where benevolent fairies reside, are of pre-Indo-European origin, but these gradually penetrated and shaped the Celtic world of beliefs, from the lower classes upwards.[43]

The Celts did not have a hierarchical pantheon like the Greeks. Each tribe had its own gods, so these were very numerous. Therefore, more than three hundred Celtic names of gods have been identified, of which only a few occur more than once. Among the deities, these Indo-European gods stand out: Teutates, the tribal god of each tribe under many different names; Taranis, the god of thunder; Esus, the god of war; and perhaps Belenus/Beli, the sun god. Pre-Indo-European gods, which the Celts appropriated, are Cernunnos, the deer god as "Lord of the Animals," and Lug, the god and magician, rich of arts and crafts. These have a matriarchal background. Lug represents the deified sacred kings of the Túatha Dé Danann, the title of whom was probably "Lug." Next to Cernunnos stands the white deer goddess, Liban, the original "Lady of the Animals," who is mythologically related to the pre-Indo-European Artemis/Diana. The sun god Beli also is not necessarily original, since before him there was the sun goddess Belena/Belisama.[44]

←456 | 457→The Celtic gods were made superior to the more ancient goddesses, but these were not lost completely. Even the primal goddess of the Picts, Dana, has been preserved in the names of special features of the landscape. For example, the goddess was seen embodied in twin hills as her breasts, as shown by the “Paps of Danu” (Killarney, Ireland), and the “Paps of Jura” (Cnoc Seannda, Scotland) (Fig. 3). In other words, as Mother Earth she was the land itself—an ancient matriarchal concept. This idea was continued in the Old Irish mythology, in the double figure of the ugly old crone and the beautiful young woman. When a young man was asked by the old woman to kiss her, and he did it, she transformed into the beautiful young woman, and he became the king of the land. This double figure is the personification of Ireland itself, the land, which is ugly in wintertime and beautiful in spring blossom. Whoever wants to become king must be able to love the land in both its guises. This matriarchal element is just as clearly evident in the goddess Erin/Eire who, at her sanctuary of Tara in the center of Ireland, is also called the “Sovereignty of Erin,” the sovereignty or freedom of the country of Ireland. She chooses her Sacred King by presenting him with her golden chalice, filled with a red drink.[45] A variant of Dana is the ancient goddess Cerridwen, ←457 | 458→with her “magic cauldron” that inexhaustibly gives life, healing and rebirth—a clear reference to the matriarchal religion of rebirth. Her daughter is the goddess Brighde/Brigid, the “High One,” also with a magic cauldron as the “Cauldron of Inspiration,” symbolizing the spiritual creative side of the goddess.[46]

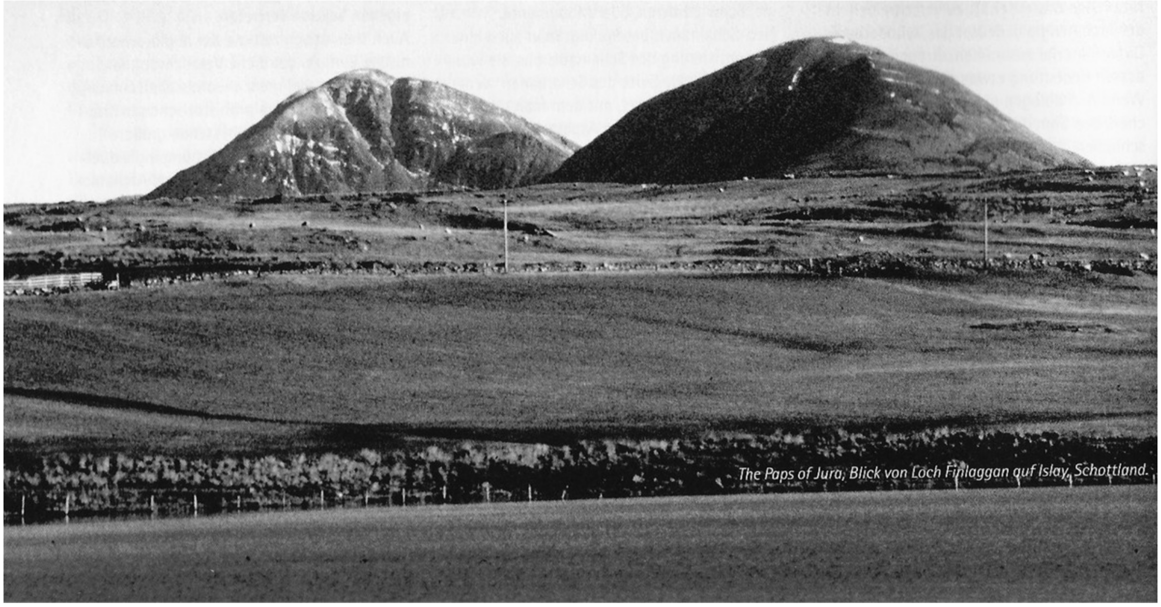

The Paps of Jura, Blick von Loch Finlaggan auf Islay, Schottland.

Fig. 3: The Breasts of Dana, called “Paps of Jura,” Cnoc Seannda (Scotland)

Similarly, very old mother goddesses were highly venerated, such as Modron in Wales, and the Matres/Matrons on the continent in the Celtic Rhineland. These were threefold mother goddesses, gentle and nourishing, depicted with bowls of fruit and ears of grain on countless votive stones (Fig. 4).[47] This continued worshipping of goddesses was by no means the business of upper-class men. First and foremost, it was women who preserved the old beliefs in goddesses and rebirth, whether these women were natives, or other women adopting such beliefs from the natives. While upper-class men invoked their war gods, the oppressed ←458 | 459→women asked the mother goddesses to help them with their griefs. Likewise, the ordinary people from the peasant lower class, both men and women, turned to the divine mothers with requests to relieve their burden of daily life. These matriarchal elements in religiosity are therefore by no means “Celtic” and not valid throughout society, but reflect the split in the patriarchal culture.

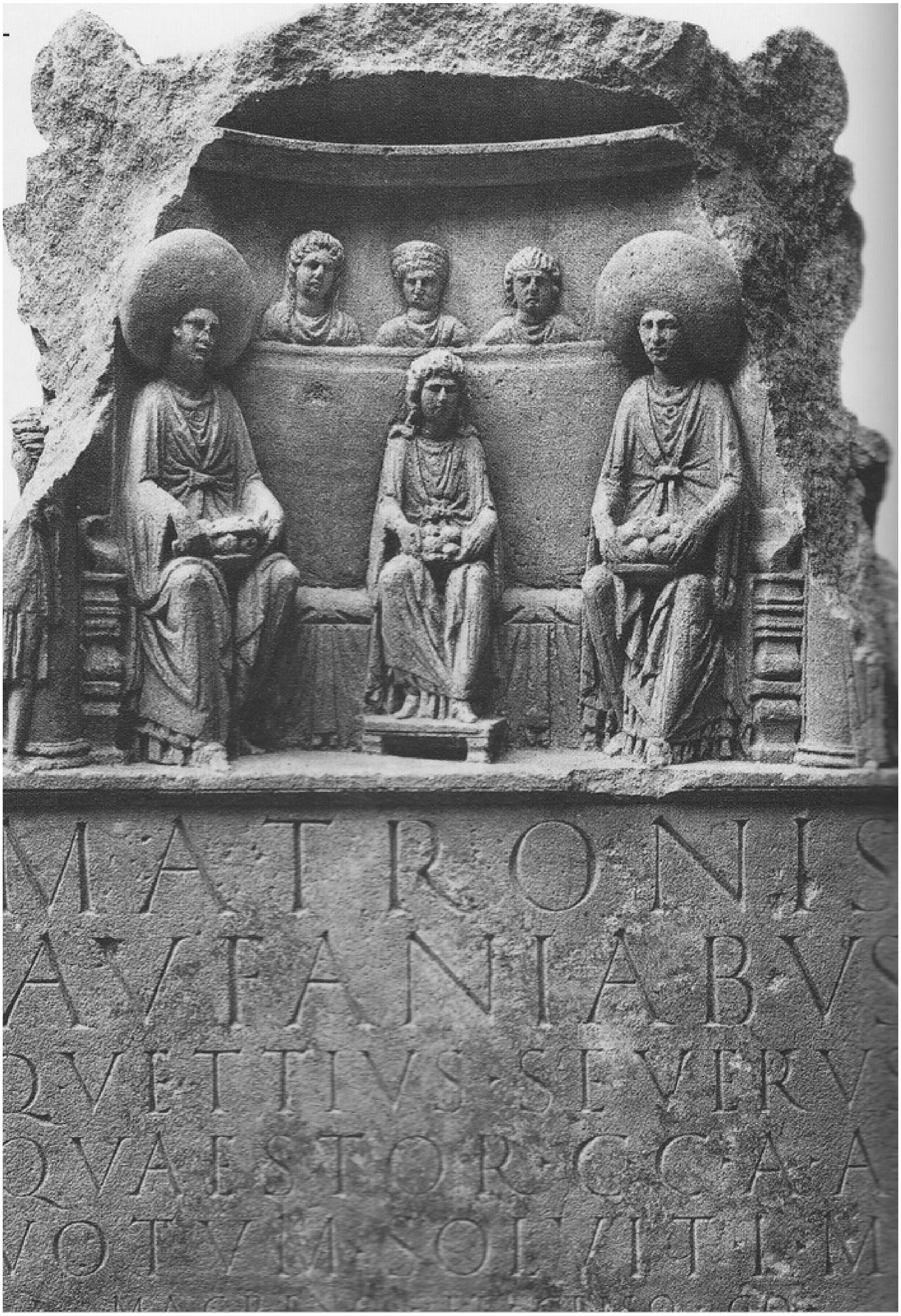

MATRONIS
AVFANIABVS
Q VETTIVS SEVERVS
QVAESTOR C C A A
VOTVM SOLVIT L M

Fig. 4: Votive stone of the Three Matrons, Rhineland (Germany) (Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, Germany)

At the same time, the goddesses were also patriarchalized, depriving them of their originally powerful character, and pressing them into role models more in line with the status of Celtic women. Not only were certain goddesses directly masculinized, such as Dana/Dôn to Donnus, but some were turned into wives, like Dana becoming the wife of Beli, or daughters of fathers rather than mothers, like Brigid as the god Dagda's daughter. The mother goddesses were provided with sun-sons that soon surpassed them, like the young god Mabon outshining the old goddess Modron.[48] Goddesses were also successively degraded and humiliated, as with Rhiannon who was pushed back and forth between men until she was stripped of her divinity. The feminine-divine was also dismantled, and ultimately turned into an artificial figure created by the hand of a male sorcerer, like the flower girl Blodeuedd.[49]

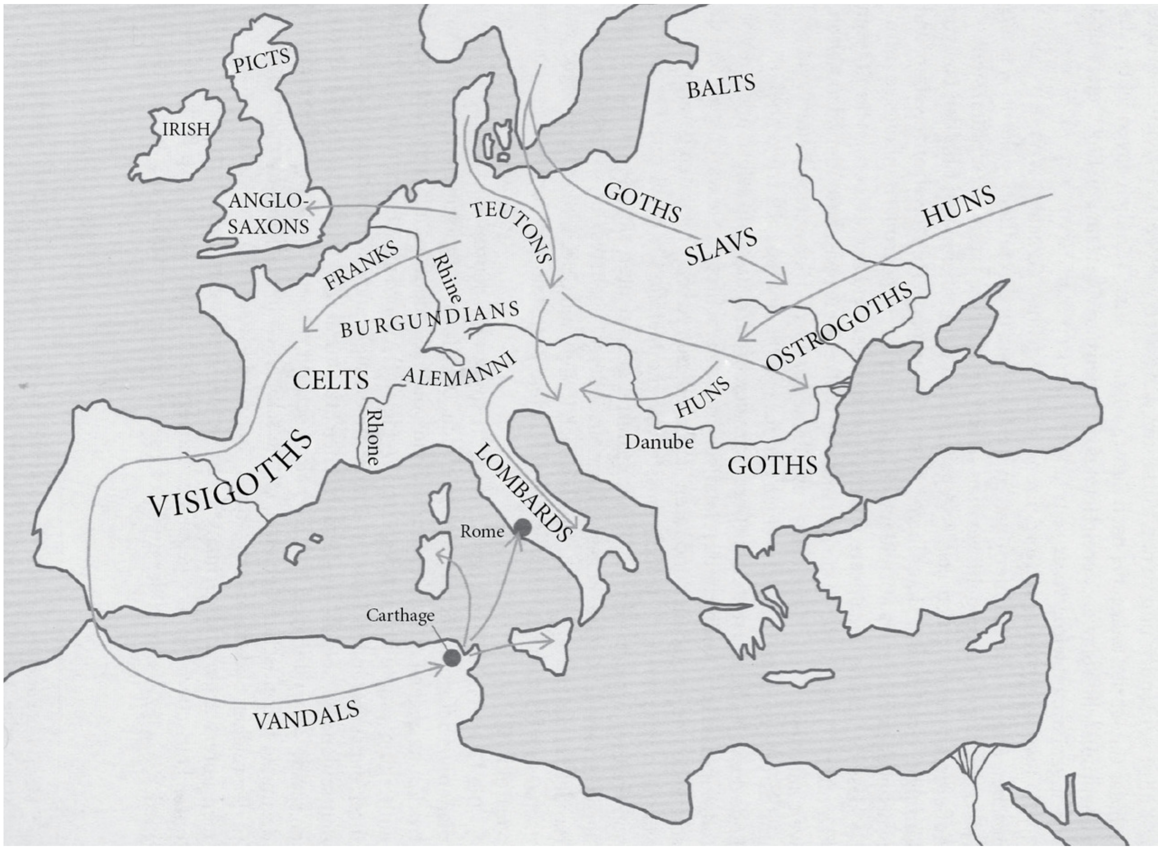
Such changes and distortions of matriarchal beliefs were brought about by the patriarchal priests that had now emerged among the Indo-Europeans. Their task was to serve their warlords ideologically, and thus they became a famous, and at the same time feared pillar of their power.[50] Among the Celtic aristocrats, it was the priesthood of the Druids, who—after having usurped the knowledge and religion of the native peoples—perverted these and developed their own religious system. They invented an esoteric doctrine based on the reincarnation of souls, which was supposed to take away the warriors' fear of death, and make them temerariously daring. They also engaged in astronomy, mathematics, and physics. Even the Romans admired them for such scientific activities, but these had already been developed by the local builders of the great megalithic architecture before the Druids. However, the Druids claimed that the megalithic buildings had been made by themselves—which is still partly believed to this day. In particular, they abused their theology of the immortality of the soul to carry out ←459 | 460→ mass human sacrifices. At first, those sacrificed to the gods were criminals, but when the supply ran out, they resorted to innocent people. In this way, the Druid priests terrorized the population and kept them in fear, forcing ordinary Celts to behave submissively towards their rulers. The Druids did not shy away from burning widows either. When a high-ranking warlord died, they would throw his wives and servants into the flames of the funeral pyre if these people did not jump in themselves. This horror of human sacrifice has been witnessed by Roman writers, eventually leading to a ban on Druidism by the Roman emperor.[51]

The Germanic Peoples and the Question of Matriarchy

The Migration Routes of the Germanic Peoples

Although violence in Europe had already increased considerably with the Celtic campaigns during the Iron Age, it increased even more with the early history of the Germanic peoples. But its origins were by no means heroic.

The ancestors of the Germanic peoples, emerging from the combination of Battle-ax warriors, who were cattle breeders, with more ancient native peoples, had resided in North Europe for a long time. There, the native peoples belonged to a large area of the Atlantic megalithic culture, whose stone monuments are located in the same countries occupied by these Indo-Europeans: North Germany, North Poland, Denmark, and South Sweden. Another branch of Indo-European immigrants settled on the northeastern Baltic coast, in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and South Finland, where they, in turn, joined with the people from the matriarchal Narva culture and became the ancestors of the Balts. At times, the territory of the Balts extended as far as Central Russia.[52] South of this lived the Indo-European Slavs. Their homeland is assumed to lie between the upper reaches of the Bug, Dnieper and Don, where they remained for a very long time (Map 12).[53]


PICTS
IRISH
BALTS
ANGLO-SAXONS
TEUTONS
GOTHS
SLAVS
HUNS
FRANKS
Rhine
BURGUNDIANS
OSTROGOTHS
CELTS
ALEMANNI
HUNS
Rhone
Danube
GOTHS
VISIGOTHS
LOMBARDS
Rome
Carthage
VANDALS

Map 12: The migration routes of the Germanic peoples in Europe

←460 | 461→The Bronze Age peoples in North Europe are the *Early Germanic peoples*. They had learned agriculture and shipbuilding from the native women and men, as is supported by rock drawings, where they are seen on ships with their battle-axes raised.[54] They also took advantage of the megalithic culture of the native ←461 | 462→people, and abused this to build single graves for their chiefs.[55] From 1,500 they imported bronze weapons and bronze objects from Central Germany. Their own standard of bronze was so primitive at first, they only had shields and spears made of wood, and fought with stone battle-axes.[56] This made them far inferior to the other peoples of Europe, especially the Celts, who had metal spears and swords, cavalry and chariots, not to mention their numerical superiority.[57] By the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, the Germanic peoples had mastered bronze casting by themselves. One advantage was that their leaders did not disdain manual crafts; in fact, they became skilled metalsmiths and boat builders and worked together with ordinary men.[58] However, the Germanic peoples had to import the metals they needed to produce bronze from distant lands. Like the Balts, the currency used for this trade was amber from the Baltic Sea. Amber was extremely sought-after. Consequently, amber trade routes could be found all over Europe, leading to Italy and Greece, and even further to the east, up to the Caucasus and Ural Mountains. At that time amber was considered as precious as gold.[59]

The Iron Age came quite late to North Europe, in the 1st millennium BCE, and at first it did not go well for the Germanic peoples. The climate change, with severe droughts towards the end of this millennium, accompanied by a cold period in North Europe, deprived them of arable and pasture land. In addition, the Celts, with their expanding Hallstatt culture, cut off their trade links to Central Germany. As a result, the Germanic peoples in Denmark and southern Scandinavia rapidly impoverished (6th-5th century BCE). They survived by carrying out predatory raids and plundering in Celtic areas, until finally migrating en masse to the richer south. From the Baltic coast of North Germany to Bohemia, they subdued and Germanized the local population that had previously been under Celtic influence. Finally, they settled there in farming villages. Additionally, between the Oder and the Vistula, Germanic peoples conquered land on their southern migrations and settled these as well (2nd-1st century BCE).[60] But this did not happen peacefully in any way, because the Celts did not voluntarily give up their eastern sphere of power, this time of their La Tène culture. The result was constant fighting. After the Germanic peoples had turned ←462 | 463→ the situation in their favor, they took over Celtic cultural assets from the locals they had subdued, because the Celts were considerably more advanced in terms of civilization.

From now on, the fate of the Germanic peoples was to migrate widely to acquire new land for their growing tribes. Around 120 BCE, the peoples of the Cimbri and Teutons left their home in Jutland (Denmark) on a massive campaign, because an extremely high spring tide had destroyed their agriculture. They were joined by other Germanic peoples from the North Sea coast, hit just as hard by the tide. About 300,000 people now moved in two extensive wagon treks, with their cattle, through Germany and Bohemia to the southeast, reaching the middle Danube at the edge of the Eastern Alps (see Map 12). Here they had a new and trying experience, encountering the Romans who opposed them with three legions. But the Germanic peoples managed to defeat them in the first battle and to disperse them. The Cimbri then separated from the others and sometime later invaded the Po Valley in Italy. The major part of the treks, the Teutons, now moved far to the west across the Rhine to Gaul, plundering villages along the way and leaving destroyed farmland behind them. In Gaul, they once again came across four Roman legions, which attempted to stop the invaders of their Roman province. As the Teutons' request for arable land in order to lead a peaceful life was rejected by the capital, Rome, the Germanic people destroyed these Roman legions, too (105 BCE). Now the Romans began to fear the "Furor Teutonicus," or "Teutonic fury," of these tall savages from the north, for again they crushed three Roman legions that confronted them on the Rhône. The Romans trembled at the thought that these barbarians might turn their masses against Rome, but the Germanic trek wandered aimlessly through North Spain and returned to Gaul. Here, two years later, the Romans, with a reinforced army, were finally able to end the Germanic invasion of their empire with a victory (Aix-en-Provence, 103 BCE).[61]

These Roman soldiers witnessed a gruesome spectacle, however. The Germanic women certainly took part in the "Furor Teutonicus," for they would not tolerate their men losing the battle and running back to the wagons, which blocked their way of escape. The women furiously shouted at these retreating men, and killed them with hatchets as "traitors," no matter if they were their fathers, brothers or sons. They even took action against the Roman soldiers, tearing away their shields and swords with their bare hands, without paying attention to their own ←463 | 464→wounds, until they themselves were killed. Two years later, when the Romans once again defeated the Cimbri, in a massive fight in the Po Valley (Vercella, 101 BCE), the women, standing on the wagons dressed in black robes, killed their fleeing men at this, too. And they strangled their children, or threw them under the wheels of the wagons and the hooves of the draught animals, finally killing themselves. Under no circumstances did they want to fall into Roman captivity and slavery.[62]—These were the first impressions the Romans got from the Germanic peoples, which they had not encountered before, and they particularly admired the bravery of the women. However, in Germanic peoples, as with the Celts, women and children used to accompany the men on their war campaigns, in contrast to the early Indo-European male hordes, who would leave the women behind. Celtic and Germanic women actively defended the barricade of wagons, where the children stayed, and often interfered in the battle. In these cases, they manifested a physical strength quite equal to that of the men.[63] However, should their men be defeated, it would end tragically for them, as shown by these and other desperate acts by the women. Nevertheless, they were not allowed to take up arms themselves, these being a monopoly of the men which was off limits to women.

One wonders how the Germanic men succeeded in defeating the war-experienced, disciplined Roman military several times at the first attempt. Especially considering that, before they got to know the Roman cavalry, they used to fight on foot armed with just a lance and shield. With the force of their first attack, however, they managed to confuse the Roman battle lines, and were superior in hand-to-hand combat. In addition, the warriors would “dope” themselves extensively with drugs, getting carried away in the bloodiness of the fight. This feature of frenzy in killing is known from the warrior society called the “Berserkers,” but such potential for violence was generally high among Germanic men. Even in times of peace, they tended to be quick to draw sword. There were often pointless duels, and murders were the order of the day, followed by long-lasting blood feuds between the patriarchal clans. It was not uncommon for assemblies to end in mutual assassination when no agreement could be reached, and manslaughter was frequent after competitions. Violence was considered “heroic,” and encouraged by the Germanic warlords. They selected warriors according to their “boldness,” in other words, their willingness to kill anyone, at any time, who stood in their way, or insulted them, or prevented them from ←464 | 465→doing what they wanted.[64] Since the Germanic peoples encountered either Celts accustomed to war, or extremely well-equipped Roman soldiers, wherever they went, it was probably necessary for their leaders to push the men to extremes in order to prevail. As a consequence, the Germanic peoples became notorious among the Romans, who had encountered them in such a dramatic fashion, and they were also feared by other peoples. Above all, this indicates an increasing brutality during the Iron Age which would not stop. Especially for the Roman military Empire in Europe, these first encounters with the Germanic peoples were a bad omen.

The Germanic campaigns of conquest to the south continued, until they had settled in large areas of Central Europe from the Rhine to the Vistula and driven out the Celts. They continued to settle in farming villages with attached pasture farming, not achieving urbanization at that time. The Romans overcame and subjugated some Germanic peoples on the left bank of the Rhine, so that now Germanic men also had to serve as mercenaries in their legions. This did not turn out to be an advantage for the Roman Empire, however. Arminius (in German: “Hermann”), a chieftain of the Cherusci, also serving in the Roman army, became a commander of troops and thereby familiar with the tactics of Roman warfare. When a troop revolt broke out in North Germany, he stirred up resistance and forged several Germanic peoples into an alliance against the Romans. The Romans wanted to punish the rebels and subjugate the recalcitrant peoples, so under the commander Varus they moved to North Germany with a vast army, which stretched out over 25 km. But catastrophe struck. Arminius led the Germanic alliance to a decisive fight, lured the Romans into the Teutoburg Forest with its tangled, swampy terrain, and completely destroyed the Roman army in a three-day battle (9 CE).[65] The Roman Empire was hit hard by this defeat, and further offensives against the independent peoples in North Germany were abandoned. Instead, they entrenched themselves behind the “Limes,” applying the “wall principle” by building a strongly fortified border, dotted with stone watchtowers and castles. This wall ran along the Rhine and Danube throughout Central Europe, dividing it into two halves: Roman, and free from Romans.[66]

Eventually, even the “Limes” stopped being of any use to the Romans. In the 3rd century CE, a union of major Germanic peoples was formed, which expanded its settlement area into the south, west and east. Around 260, the ←465 | 466→Alemanni broke through this border wall, rendering it useless, and settled in what had previously been the Roman province Helvetia (Switzerland).[67] The Franks now lived on both sides of the Rhine and spread increasingly to Gaul in the west (France). The Goths moved far to the east, as far as South Russia, and settled there (see Map 12).

In the 4th century CE, a new invasion of mounted warriors from the steppes, this time by the Mongolian Huns, caused further long-lasting migrations of Germanic peoples in Europe, which had again been uprooted. During this time of the so-called “Barbarian Invasions,” the entire cultural setting of Europe changed. The Ostrogoths had to leave their homeland in South Russia, invading Hungary after some erratic migrations and also Italy, together with the Lombards. The Visigoths pushed even further west to South France and Spain. The Vandals traveled through North Africa to Carthage, which became their residence for a short time, sailing from there to Italy and plundering Rome (455 CE) (see Map 12).[68] Meanwhile, large numbers from peoples of Saxons, Angles and Jutlanders set out for and conquered Britain, pushing the Celtic Islanders to the edge of Europe (Wales, Ireland, Scotland). Many of them fled at this time to Brittany (in Celtic: “Armorika”). Finally, it was the Slavs who were expelled from Central Russia, and they now, in turn, were pushing towards Central Europe, settling on its eastern edges (Slovenia, Slovakia, and Poland, on the Elbe, on Ruegen). Everywhere the warlords of these peoples founded their own kingdoms, but these did not last long. However, the tremendous movements of so many peoples at that time led to the end of the Roman Empire.[69]

On the Social Order of the Germanic Peoples: Brave Women But without Rights

On their migratory campaigns over the centuries, the Germanic peoples met either patriarchal Celts or patriarchal Romans, and they were primarily involved in warfare with them. Although, in their area of origin, Denmark and South Sweden, they lived for a long time in close proximity to matriarchal peoples, the latter only had a limited effect on the Germanic social order in the long run.

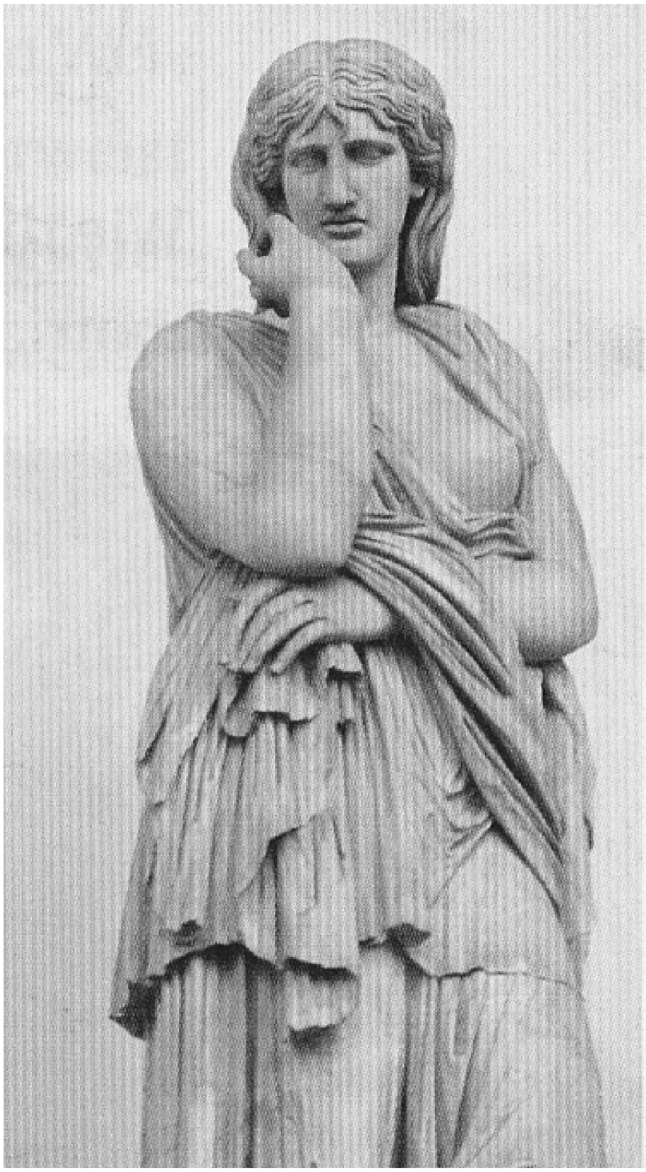
←466 | 467→At no time did the Germanic peoples have reigning queens, for after a king died another warlord always took his place.[70] Germanic women from the upper class, however, could become priestesses, who were highly respected and presided over the cultic communities. They were also said to have visionary gifts, and their advice for war or peace was followed, such as with the famous seer, Veleda.[71] As with the Celts, Germanic priestesses were exceptional women, and several of them carried out the practice of human sacrifice, which also existed in the Germanic religion, albeit not on a massive scale. These priestesses accompanied the military campaigns, and drummed on stretched skins during the fighting to make a terrifying noise. After the battle, they took care of the war prisoners—but not to ensure their well-being—placing wreaths on them, before leading them to a large cauldron, and cutting their throats. They made prophecies from the blood that spilled into the cauldron, or examined the innards of the sacrificed to predict the future.[72] In addition from carrying out such debatable actions, the status of priestesses also proved to be problematic. This was because the boundary between dreaded sorceresses, and “witches” who abused their magic powers, was often blurred.[73]

Ordinary Germanic women, like the Celtic women, were excluded from politics as decisions were taken in the assembly of warriors. In their personal lives, they had less to say about who they would marry than in Celtic society. Celtic women had the right to decide, by giving a bowl of water to the chosen man in the presence of relatives; in royal houses this was a goblet of wine. The woman’s choice was final for the chosen man, as well as for the two clans, which subsequently concluded the contract.[74] This custom did not apply to Germanic women. Their haven was the patriarchal clan, which was both a legal and cultic community. Within the clan there was peace, while on the outside everyone had to fight for their rights by force of arms. The clans therefore had a life of their own, and they did not renounce their right to feud and wreck revenge in order to restore injured clan honor. Both men and women lost all protection when they were cast out by the clan, something which was extremely serious for the unarmed women. This influenced the form of marriage among Germanic peoples, being fundamentally an alliance between two clans, whereby the woman was often deprived of the freedom to choose her own partner. She was subject ←467 | 468→to the clan’s authority exercised by the family father, although the members of the clan had an advisory function. The sons alone inherited the family property, because the daughters were given away in marriage. Only in exceptional cases, when no male heir was born in the clan, could a daughter inherit.[75]

The usual form was known as “Munt-Ehe,” or dowered marriage, agreed between the groom and the guardian of the bride, usually her father. The bridegroom, or his clan, would make a monetary gift to the father and received the bride in return. Since she was by no means always asked for her consent, this looks very much like a “marriage of sale.” In such marriages, the woman becomes the object of a contract, and it is reminiscent of the early Indo-European gift of cattle in exchange for a woman. She could not speak for herself, but always had a guardian, either her father or brother. Upon marriage this role of guardian passed on to the husband, so she now became legally dependent on him in his clan. A “dowered marriage” was essentially a “guardian marriage,” because at no time in her whole life was the woman considered to have come of age. Divorce was not possible for her, as it was only available to the husband.[76] This form of marriage proved to be strictly patriarchal, even more so than with the Celts, and it turned women into a plaything for the men.

Apart from dowered marriage, there was also “Raub-Ehe,” or abduction marriage, also a relic from early Indo-European times, when the kidnapping of women was commonplace. In the case of Germanic abduction marriage, a rejected pretender, if he was considered equal, could forcibly seize the desired woman and take her with him. In this case, too, she remained as an object and was subjected to marital rape. Generally, this was followed by armed conflict between the two clans, which always belonged to the upper class. Such feuds could only be settled by the “Thing,” or people’s assembly. Some courageous Germanic women, however, turned this round to such an extent that they would arrange to be kidnapped by the man they loved, thereby entering into a “Friedel-Ehe,” or love marriage. This was the only loophole in the otherwise inevitable pressure from the patriarchal clan. Love marriages also resulted in feuds that were difficult to resolve; however, the “Friedel,” the beloved woman, would still be in a bad position after a peace agreement was signed. She had broken society’s rules and left her own clan without permission, and she had not properly entered the legal community of the man’s clan. Consequently, she no longer had any legal protection and, besides, had no share in her husband’s property. He was ←468 | 469→therefore obliged to present her with a “bridegroom’s gift” the morning after the wedding night, to ensure she could be independent of both him and his clan. It was all about the house and farm, land and cattle for her, and associated servants and maids. In this transfer of goods, the woman was given power of the keys, and she was now her own mistress. But only a rich man could afford this form of marriage and, moreover, be able to take on the quarrel with the woman’s clan. Consequently, “Friedel-Ehe” was very rare and only enjoyed by the nobility.[77]

The displeasure felt concerning the “impudent cheek” of a woman entering into a love marriage with a man she had chosen herself would inevitably smolder for a long time. This is illustrated by the fate of the Germanic noblewoman, Thusnelda. She loved her cousin, the hero Arminius, who had defeated the Romans in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, and she arranged to be kidnapped by him. Her father never forgave her, because it was a daughter’s duty to obey. As a result, sometime later, when Arminius was absent due to affairs of war, ←469 | 470→Thusnelda’s father captured her, as she now lacked any kind of personal or clan protection, handing her over to the Romans. She served as his hostage, used to confirm a peace treaty with his former enemy. Thusnelda, who was pregnant and gave birth to a boy in a foreign country, endured her fate without tears or lamentation. This the Romans admired, and they treated her very respectfully during her captivity (Fig. 5). Arminius was outraged and sought a second war with the Romans to free Thusnelda, but he lost this battle.[78]



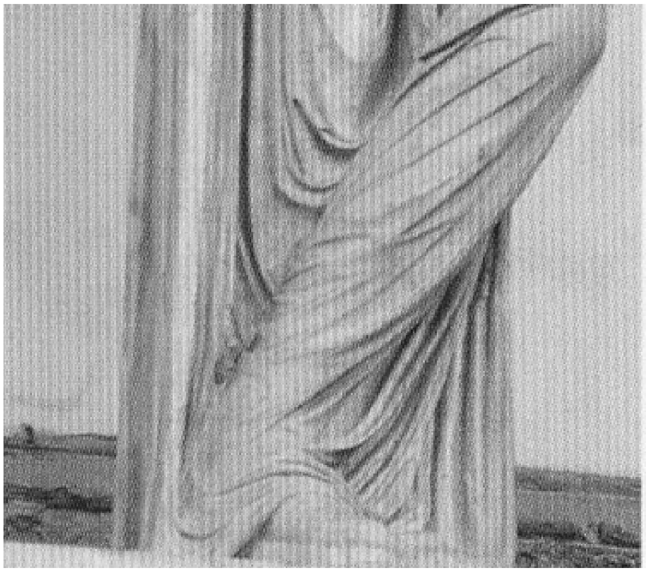


Fig. 5: Mourning Thusnelda, restored marble statue, 2nd century, Rome (Italy) (Wikimedia Commons, author: Jastrow)

For Germanic women, no rights that protected them as individuals can be found in this way of life, rights such as the Celtic women still enjoyed. However, in spite of these marital conditions, there was evidently a code of honor among Germanic men that forbade them to treat their wives badly. Violence against a woman was considered dishonorable. Mothers, in particular, were treated with respect and a certain reverence. This can be seen in the occasional following of the advice given by prophetic mothers, as well as in the remnants of matrilinearity among the noble clans of some peoples.[79]

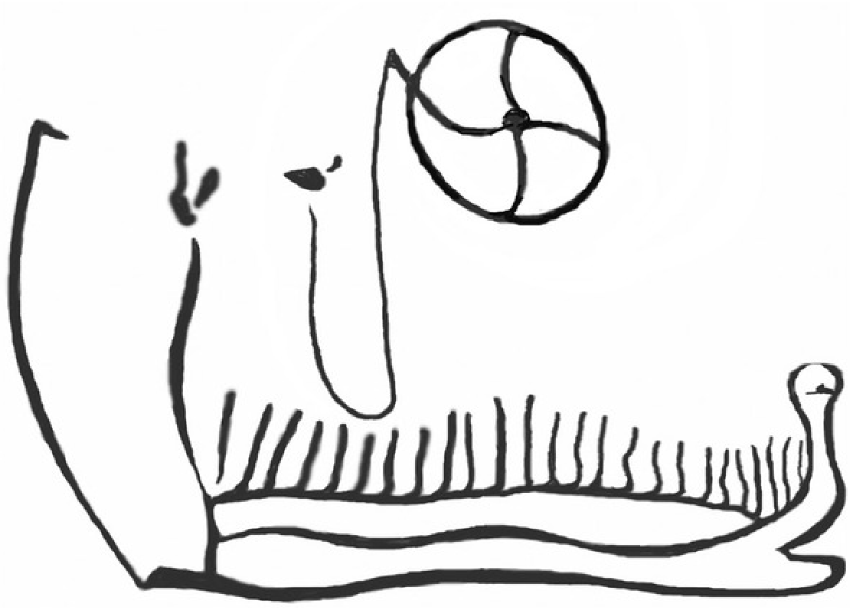
Matriarchal "Nerthus culture" and Germanic Gods

Matriarchal elements are therefore rarely found among the Germanic peoples in their social order; as with the Celts, we have to look for them in the religious sphere. Here the influence of the matriarchal megalithic culture, in whose territory the early Germanic peoples lived for a long time, is clearly visible. This culture left dolmens, menhirs, and stone circles (South Sweden), numerous megalithic burial mounds which still characterize the landscape today (Denmark), and mighty long graves and ramparts (North Germany and Island of Ruegen). Such features had originated from the British Isles and Brittany.[80] Since we no longer know the names of the peoples of this matriarchal culture, but their goddess Nerthus is well known as the oldest and most important, we call it here the "Nerthus culture."

As it is the case in patriarchal societies, the religious sphere of the Germanic peoples was also split into a religion of the dominant class and other beliefs of the oppressed women and peasant lower class. The early patriarchal population, which had already reached southern Scandinavia with the Battle-ax people, worshiped the sky and war god Tyr/Ziu, the name "Ziu" being related to "Zeus," referring to the general Indo-European God-Father. However, he faded away with the appearance of the later Germanic war gods Odin/Wodan and Thor/Donar, who were worshiped by the warlords and their followers. Odin and Thor are the North Germanic variant of these gods, and Wodan and Donar the South Germanic variant. The name of "Wodan/Wotan" means the "furious one," who storms up with his hordes of riders and, as if possessed, destroys everything that gets in his way. He was the god of battle and became increasingly important in the southern Germanic regions during the violent migrations of the "Barbarian Invasions," where his sphere of influence also expanded.[81] The North Germanic Odin, the "Allfather" and chief of the Aesir gods, used other methods to achieve his goals. Through cunning and treachery, he extorted old, magical knowledge from the pre-Indo-European priestesses, in other cases obtaining this through fraud and perjury and, finally, even praising himself for his cunning.[82] As a result, he was considered a great "magician" and "wise man." This reflects the methods used by the Germanic warlords to take over practical and cultural knowledge from the local matriarchal peoples in South Sweden. The myths explicitly state that first the goddess Freyja/Frigga possessed the art of magic, which she taught to Odin—although whether voluntarily, or not, is another matter.[83] On the other hand, Thor/Donar, whose name means "thunder," loves direct violence, and he smashes down all resistance with his hammer. Here the "hammer" refers to the stone battle-ax of the Battle-ax people, and it also signifies the lightning bolt. In this way he kills the “giants” several times—in other words, the former, native population.[84]

In contrast, the lower classes, the Germanic peasant people, and especially the women, held the religion of the goddess in high esteem. In South Sweden and Denmark, the goddess’s religion had entered the Germanic belief system through the local women. This religion contained very old figures, such as the three Norns, goddesses of fate who are also described as “giantesses.” They determined the fate not only of humans, but also of the gods. Whenever these giant people are mentioned, it always alludes to the native matriarchal population, which apparently had the great power required to build megalithic buildings from “giant” stones. The Indo-Europeans, who arrived later, could not otherwise explain the technique ←471 | 472→ of megalithic architecture. The patriarchal Aesir gods used these so-called “giants” as master architects for their own castles, but, finally, they cheated the skillful builders out of their wages and killed them in the end. The god Thor acts in the same way, when he wants to obtain the magical “cauldron” that symbolizes the goddess, and with it her power. Typically, the pre-Indo-European goddess with her cauldron of rebirth also dwells with the “giants.” Thor wins the trust of the “giants” through hypocritical pretense, only to slay them and steal the “cauldron.”[85]

Even more powerful than the Norns is their mother, the earth goddess called “Joerd” (North Germanic) or “Erda/Hertha” (South Germanic), a name latinized by the Romans to “Nerthus.” The Roman historian Tacitus states that she was honored throughout Germania. She lives on a holy island in the sea and comes from there by ship to visit the people. Her ship is the “Ship of Renewal,” it brings back the sun in spring. This can be seen in granite slab carvings in South Sweden and on the islands of the Baltic Sea (Fig. 6 a, b). The ship also returns with the “Tree of Life” (Fig. 6 c). In autumn, the ship takes the deceased to the Otherworld in the west.[86] However, Nerthus had many cult sites on the islands and along the coast, in those northern areas where the matriarchal population had once settled with their seafaring culture. Therefore, according to the myth, the goddess would arrive by ship. As soon as she had gone ashore, she would travel from place to place on a consecrated wagon pulled by cows. She was joyfully welcomed everywhere she went. No weapons or iron objects were tolerated in her presence, but locked away, and peace reigned supremely during her procession.[87]—This cult of Mother Earth is very old and typically matriarchal; it did not die out among the Germanic peasant people until the Middle Ages, and even later.



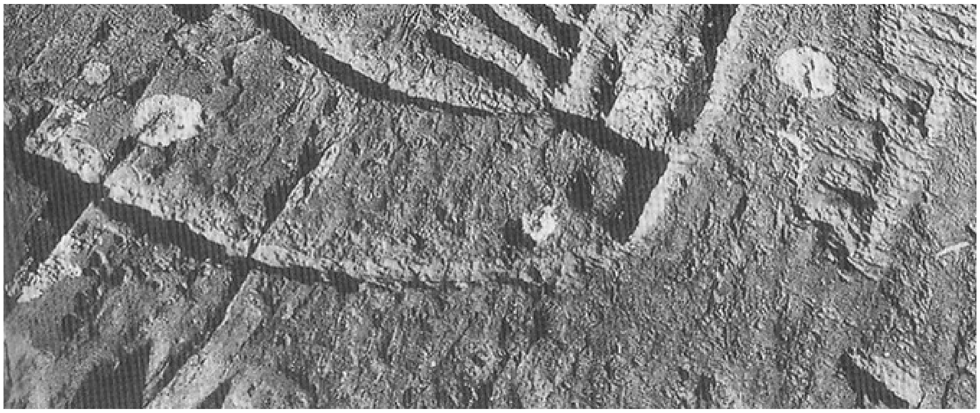


Fig. 6a, b: The “Ship of Renewal” with the sun, rock engraving near Bottna, Bohuslän (South Sweden) (Drawing by Gudrun Frank-Wissmann; Photo by Robert Wallis, section of the image)

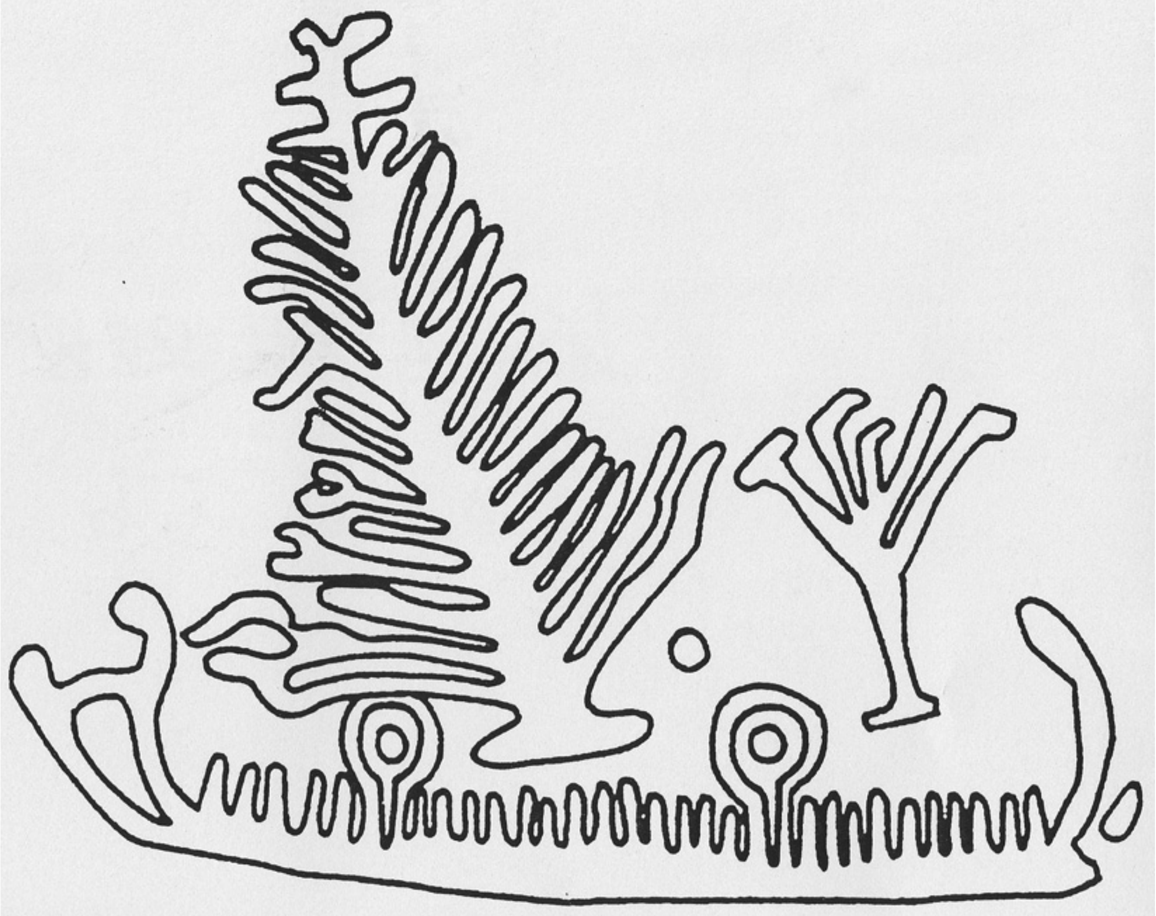


Fig. 6c: The “Ship of Renewal” with the “Tree of Life,” rock engraving near Lökerberget, Foss (South Sweden) (Drawing by Oskar Almgren)

Moreover, it is said that the goddess, as the North Germanic Joerd who needs no partner to give birth, has two children: a daughter, Freyja, and a son, Freyr. Together, these three deities form the typical matriarchal family pattern of mother-daughter-son; they are the pre-Indo-European Vanir group. They were considered peaceful deities, who bestow love and beauty (Freyja), fertility, wealth and happiness (Freyr), and thereby give people a good life. Freyja is a Great Goddess of the three spheres of the world: she flies with her garment of feathers in the Heaven; as a goddess of love, she creates life on Earth; she has a wonderful hall full of art and music in the Underworld. Freyr is her lover and Holy King—illustrating the late matriarchal pattern of the Bronze Age. It is said that ←472 | 473→they live on the seashore, on islands, or in halls in the depths of the sea. In fact, Freyr has a magic ship, which was believed to be the first ship since primordial times—again evidence of their maritime origins via the Atlantic route. Their holy places of worship were in South Sweden. Close to Uppsala, the remains of a large wooden temple have been found, which is said to have once been magnificent and splendid. Here the goddess, in the form of the priestess, celebrated the Sacred ←473 | 474→Marriage with her Holy King. Thus, the configuration that had been valid for a long time in the Bronze Age can also be found here.[88]

The resistance put up by the people from the matriarchal Nerthus culture against the invading Indo-European warriors is reflected in the myth of the war of the Vanir deities against the Aesir gods, where the Aesir were almost defeated. The Vanir were superior to them, not only in wealth and cultural advancement, but also in wisdom and magic art. The peaceable nature of the Vanir finally led them to compromise with the Aesir, and hostages were exchanged to confirm their good intentions. However, this did not bring the Vanir deities any luck in terms of the history of religion, for, by the prevailing patriarchal methods, they were cheated, and their matriarchal religion was distorted. At first, the goddess Joerd was masculinized to “Njoerd,” which meant that Freyja and Freyr were now preceded by a father as head. The Sacred Marriage between Freyja and Freyr was frowned upon as “incest,” and Freyja was made

Odin’s lover. Here she was reduced in her functions to solely a goddess of love, on occasion being insulted as a “whore.”[89]

Odin’s wife had to be Frigga, whose mythological figure fluctuates between Freyja and Joerd. On the one hand, she keeps the holy cauldron of Freyja and brews mead in it, which was considered a magic potion (Fig. 7). On the other hand, she can command the elements, animals, and even diseases, indicating the power of Mother Earth, Joerd. As Odin’s wife, however, she was pushed into the background and was only considered as the donor of marriage—in the patriarchal sense. Nevertheless, in spite of this distortion of the content of matriarchal myths, popular belief in Mother Earth did not die out. In the South Germanic religion, Frigga still appears as an independent goddess called Fricka, or Frau Fricke in North Germany, Hel or Frau Holle in Central Germany, and Percht or Frau Berchta in South Germany and the Alpine region. Here she is absolutely independent, without a father or husband.[90]

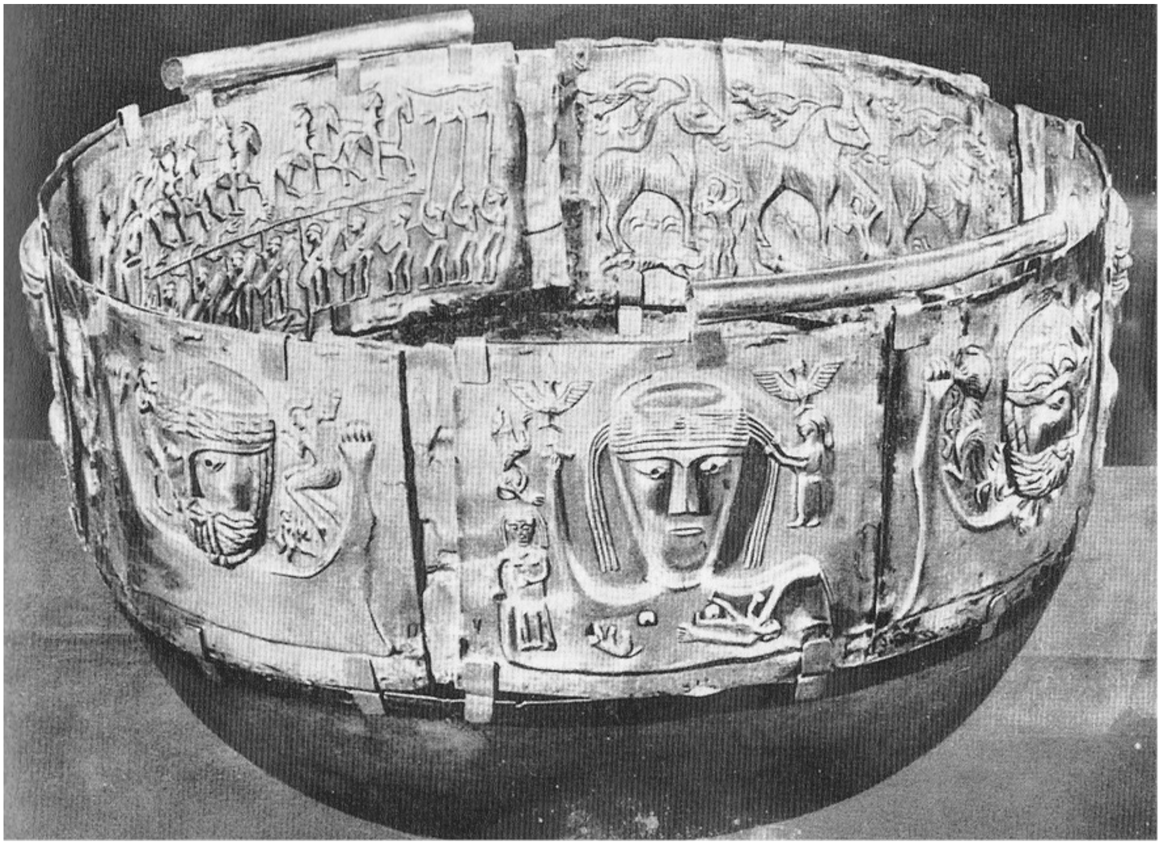


Fig. 7: The Cauldron of Gundestrup with the image of a mother goddess, cultic vessel of silver, Jutland (Denmark) (The National Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark)

There is a rich mythology about the figure of Frau Holle (“Mother Hulda”) under her various names, disguised in the form of fairy tales, which shows her former importance as the triple Great Goddess of Central Europe. On the one hand, she is identical with Mother Earth, because she changes her face, like the earth, through all the seasons; on the other hand, she dwells in the Heaven making the weather, as well as dwelling in her evergreen paradise in the Underworld. Above all, her characteristics clearly indicate her pre-Indo-European origin, since she resembles the age-old Basque goddess Mari. Like her, she bakes bread in ←475 | 476→her underworld paradise and turns whatever she wants into gold. She uses only golden things, such as her spindle and comb for her golden hair.[91] But, like other goddesses, she too was classified among the “lower deities” in the patriarchal belief system, since she belonged to women and the “lower” classes. Still later, she was turned into a female vegetation demon, and in her shape as Frau Percht, she was degraded to a specter that flies around at night and frightens children. However, this did not prevent the ordinary people, who lived in remote areas of Central Germany and Bavaria, from believing in and worshiping her until the 18th century.[92]

These matriarchal elements, and others, are included in the Germanic religion, albeit in a precarious situation in this patriarchal warrior society. They were split off from the dominant class and persisted only among women and the lower classes. It was the same case with other patriarchal peoples of Europe, such as the Slavs, Balts and Finns. Here too, apart from the typically dominant gods of the sky, thunder and war of the upper class, goddesses existed more or less covertly as “lower deities,” and remnants of the customs associated with them can be found. The strongest and most enduring love for Mother Earth and her different appearances continued among the peasant lower class. In Slavic she is called “Maty Syraya Žemlya” and was fondly addressed everywhere, as shown by the names

“Maty Rossiya” (Mother Russia), “Matushka Volga” (Little Mother Volga), “Matushka dubravushka” (Little Mother Oak Forest).[93] In the Baltic, Mother Earth is called “Žemyna,” and the Baltic population has honored her in the landscape up to the present.[94] In Finnish, her names are “Maa Emo” or “Rauni,” and these are still known today.[95]

With the emergence of Christianity, the situation for goddesses and women became even more precarious. Some western and southern Germanic peoples had already been subjugated by the Romans, and they had to accept the strict Roman hierarchy and law, which significantly lowered the status of Germanic women. Then, supported by the power of the Roman military, Christianity arrived to the Germanic peoples. Even later, in the Early Middle Ages, it was forcibly imposed by the sword, from France throughout the Germanic world. An example of this is the so-called “Massacre of Verden,” where 4,500 Saxon people, who refused to convert to Christianity, were put to the sword by Charlemagne.[96] Missionary work was all the easier, because the Germanic peoples had no organized religion—unlike the Celts with Druidism. The peoples living further east and north, the Slavs, Balts, and Finns, were reached by Christianity much later, but here it was also imposed with destructive violence. As an example, the conquest of the Slavic Ruegen Island by a Christian Danish king should be mentioned, as well as the forced conversion of the Slavs, after their temples had been burned down.[97]

←476 | 477→

Now the goddesses to whom women could still turn for comfort and help were demonized, and the priestesses who had given them support were abolished. In that way, the last remaining matriarchal elements came to an end. The priesthood became monastic and solely masculine, as masculine as the Father-God with his one-and-only son, and misogyny, which saw women as the souce of all evil, became an integral part of Christian theology. Among the lower classes, women held onto their goddess beliefs and ancient customs for a long time in secret. They often had to pay for this with their lives during the so-called “witch-hunt” all over Europe. What had begun as the witch-hunt finally became part of the common world view, and escalated into the madness of a centuries-long pogrom against women in general, bringing horrific death on the pyre to thousands of them.[98] This represented the absolute low point in the development of patriarchy in Europe.

Let us summarize the findings of this chapter.

- The circumstances of the *Bronze Age* in Europe north of the Alps show that the establishment of hierarchy and *domination was still uncertain and short-term.* We can discern a social instability, between the local foundations of patriarchal warlords and the cultures of the still extensive matriarchal peoples in western and northern Europe, and in various remote ←477 | 478→peripheral areas. Overall, this epoch was less warlike than previously thought. Generalized war did not arise until the *Iron Age*, with the aggressive expansion of Iron Age peoples in Central Europe.
- Patriarchalization in Europe north of the Alps:
- *The Celtic peoples:* The two successive Iron Age cultures of the Celts, Hallstatt and La Tène, and their expansion throughout the area of Europe north of the Alps, including the British Isles, as well as Celtic campaigns in southern Europe *generalized war in the Iron Age.* This was accompanied by considerable patriarchalization, illustrating the *ambivalent situation of Celtic women. Matriarchal elements* still persisted in the *Celtic religion* which was, however, divided into the beliefs of the dominant class (sky and war gods), and the beliefs of the women and lower classes (mother goddesses).
- *The Germanic peoples:* The first and also later migrations of the Germanic peoples to the south, conquering large parts of Central and West Europe, *aggravated the war among Iron Age peoples,* who fought against each other everywhere. At the same time, the *Roman military Empire expanded* into the countries north of the Alps, making subjugation and uprisings epidemic, and representing a major step towards the further patriarchalization of Europe. The *situation of Germanic women* was even worse than that of Celtic women, for they were entirely *without rights or property,* and could only exist within the

patriarchal clans. As with the Celts, *matriarchal elements* were only preserved in the *Germanic religion*, by limiting them to downgraded, partly demonized goddesses and sporadic customs. Here too, religion was split, between the upper class and the lower classes and women.

A Concluding Critique of Concepts

This chapter's analysis of the patriarchal basis of the Celtic and Germanic peoples with some matriarchal remnants makes it extremely problematic to speak simply of a "Celtic matriarchy," or "Germanic matriarchy," as is sometimes the case. A few occasional queens, or prophesying high priestesses, as exceptional phenomena, by no means constitute a matriarchy, either in Europe or in other regions. Such searches for female candidates at the top of a hierarchy bring back into play the old prejudice of "female domination," which is fundamentally misleading. Ruling queens are completely irrelevant for a matriarchal society, because otherwise England under Queen Elizabeth I and Austria under Empress Maria Theresia would have been matriarchies—which no-one would ever claim.

←478 | 479→

Nor do the matriarchal elements that can be found in the Celtic and Germanic religions and also in the Greek and Roman religions, as well as the occasional, sparse remains of matrilinearity among the nobility, indicate any diffuse "matriarchal primeval state" among these peoples, as had also been suggested. Unfortunately, the theorists in question do not provide us with any information regarding when and where this is supposed to have taken place, or why these peoples abandoned it. It merely disguises the fact that Greek, Roman, Celtic, and Germanic peoples encountered preceding, well-developed matriarchal cultures during their warlike conquests, triggering far-reaching conflicts that can be seen in both archaeological finds and historical sources, and are also reflected in these peoples' respective mythologies. The earlier, non-Indo-European cultures can be clearly recognized as the Neolithic and Bronze Age megalithic cultures of Old Europe, as well as the first highly-developed cultures along the Danube and in the Aegean area. Consequently, such matriarchal elements are not a “mystery” among the later Indo-European peoples, but rather adoptions from these matriarchal cultures. Mysterious problems of this kind can only arise when the history of cultures is seen as a one-dimensional flow of everlasting patriarchal patterns and values. Only by acknowledging that, before the various patriarchal societies, a completely different social order had been commonplace, can we fully appreciate a differentiated view of human cultural development, as well as the role of women as creators of culture.

The situation is no better with claims of “Basque matriarchy,” “Breton matriarchy,” “Slavic matriarchy,” and so on. In these, hardly any female rulers appear, but a special position of women has been ethnologically recorded in the present.[99] We ask, however, what this term, used here excessively, is supposed to mean? One author explains, with astonishing naivety, that he uses the term matriarchy “as a collective term for instances of significant femininity.”[100] This expands the scope of the term to an unlimited extent, and thus makes it unusable as an instrument of analysis. According to this approach, the bloody French Revolution would ←479 | 480→have also been a matriarchal process, since it was started by the market women of Paris with the storming of the Bastille, an instance that certainly suggests “significant femininity.”

This unclear terminology is the reason for frequent misconceptions about the true state of historical and contemporary societies. After all, scattered matriarchal elements are more or less still present in every patriarchal society; they could not be totally eradicated. Such isolated elements, however, no longer constitute a matriarchy, since this would require the complete structure of a matriarchal society at all levels. Rather, the adherence to a few matriarchal elements in patriarchal societies reflects a longing of the underprivileged, especially women, for better living conditions—even if they are no longer aware of the cultural and historical roots of these elements from former matriarchies. If we were to inflate these remnants everywhere to a “matriarchy,” matriarchal societies would have never ceased to exist!

It tends to be overlooked that the term “matriarchy” refers to societies with very specific patterns, which I have worked out based on my empirical research into societies of this type that still exist today, published in a previous book.[101] These patterns have been briefly presented in the introduction to this volume. Only when the patterns of matriarchal society have been precisely defined and understood at all levels, economic, social, political and cultural, can they shed new light on the history of cultures.

In the course of this cultural-historical presentation, I have traced and explained these patterns in West Asia and Europe, thereby revealing the long epoch of matriarchal societies on both continents. At the same time, the knowledge of matriarchal patterns has made it possible to grasp and realize the initial emergence, and later development, of patriarchal societies in West Asia and Europe. My study has examined this development, as well as its consequences for women and for the respective societies as a whole, clearly showing that it developed very differently on each of these continents. Such a finding is also extremely important for today’s political concerns, helping us to perceive the different forms of patriarchy in contemporary societies, and to change their oppressive patterns from within.

The first step towards this is insight. –

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[1] In some rock paintings men have proudly immortalized themselves with ploughs and teams of oxen, as can be seen, for example, in the archaeological national park of Val Camonica in North Italy.

[2] The mistaken idea that patriarchy was created by men ploughing the land originates from this situation. In fact, the Indo-Europeans had already adopted patriarchy thousands of years earlier and had brought it with them from the steppes.

[3] See, overall, the interesting study resulting from archaeology, palaeolinguistics, palaeogenetics and isotope studies by K. Kristiansen, E. Willerslev, et al.: “Re-theorizing mobility,” 334–347.

[4] Ibid.

[5] For example, in sites of the Lech Valley in Bavaria (Germany).

6 Research based on DNA analysis and isotope studies by P.W. Stockhammer, C. Knipper, A. Mittnik et al.: “Female Exogamy and Gene Pool Diversification at the Transition from the Final Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age in Central Europe,” in: *PNAS Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, ed. T. Douglas Price, Madison, WI 2017, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 10083–10088, at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/04/forget-wandering-warrior-bronze-age-women-travelled-world-men/

7 Schnurbein: *Atlas der Vorgeschichte,* 115.

8 Christoph Hut and Joachim Koeninger: “Bauern - Handwerker - Krieger?” in: *4.000 Jahre Pfahlbauten,* 257.

9 Hoard find from Unterschoellnach, archaeological exhibition in the Hilgartsburg near Vilshofen, Eastern Bavaria.

10 See Chapter 7 of the book in hand.

11 This ideal of the Bronze Age hero was derived from Homer’s epic and is a pure male fantasy; see the criticism of that idea in Hut and Koeninger, 257–261.

12 Schnurbein, 122, 127.

13 The increasing drought in Europe can be seen by the fact that villages were often relocated. They followed streams from the upper slopes further and further downhill as these dried up, finally crowding together at a river in the valley (example from South Brandenburg, Germany). See Op. cit., 139, 148.

14 Op. cit., 140.

15 This is shown by the change in settlement patterns; see Op. cit., 148–162.

16 Op. cit., 163.

17 John Haywood: *The Historical Atlas of the Celtic World,* London 2001, Thames and Hudson.

18 Schnurbein, 156.—An important center of the Hallstatt culture was Hallein near Salzburg in the Salzkammergut, Austria. These names alone, with “Salz” meaning “salt,” indicate the rich occurrence of the mineral in this area.

19 Haywood, 34–35.

20 Op. cit., 36–39.

21 Op. cit., 13.

22 See chapter 4 of the book in hand.

23 Schnurbein, 147.

24 I. H. Longworth: *Prehistoric Britain,* London 1985, British Museum, 55–58.

25 Haywood, 78–81.

26 Jean Markale: *Women of the Celts,* London 1975, Gordon & Cremonesi (original in French, Paris 1972).—With the Celts it was possible for queens, when their husbands had fallen in battle, not only to rule but also to lead the army. However, they are rare exceptions.

27 Haywood, 82–85.

28 Contrary to the fables about them, the Picts were not dwarfs, as archaeological excavations show, but belonged to the slender Mediterranean type of people.

29 Miriam Robbins Dexter: “Reflections on the Goddess Donu,” in: *The Mankind Quarterly,* Washington, DC, 30/1–2, 1990, Council for Social & Economic Studies, 45–58; Dexter: *Whence the Goddess,* 42–46.

30 There are legend fragments of “Maydenland,” “Mayden Island” and “Maiden Castle,” which means “land or island or castle of the virgins” in the sense of independent, militant Amazons; they are connected with the pre-Celtic fairy Morgane as the giver of horses and

weapons. The reality is that Maiden Castle (South England), for example, is a hill-fort cultic site from pre-Celtic times, which was later celtizised and then christianized. See Heide Goettner-Abendroth: *Fee Morgane. Der Heilige Gral,* Koenigstein 2004, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, Part 1, 128–129, 133 (sources quoted there).

31 Brochs were built using carefully hewn flat stones, and as in the nuraghi, they could be inhabited (visited by the author).—Anna Ritchie: *Picts,* Edinburgh 1997 (7.), The Stationery Office, 5–7, 45–51.

32 According to the Roman authors: Caesar, Strabon, and Dio Cassius. See Heinrich Zimmer: *Das Mutterrecht der Pikten,* Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Romanische Abteilung, Bd. 15, Weimar 1894, Boehlau Verlag, Reprinted, in Kurt Derungs (ed.): *Keltische Frauen und Göttinnen*.

33 Markale, 40.

34 The Old Irish "Aitheda" ("Stories of Flight") particularly illustrate the clash between matriarchal and patriarchal patterns of society. In each of these stories, according to matriarchal custom, the queen chooses her lover herself. This brings her into conflict with her husband, a patriarchal king who considers her to be his property. This always results in great tragedies, which shake the kingdom to its foundations, and in the death of the loving couple, as with Deirdre and Naisi. Later epics still follow this pattern, as we can see with Isolde and Tristan, likewise with Ginevra and Lancelot. See Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, Part 3 (sources quoted there).

35 For the conflicts that arose in this clash between patriarchal and matriarchal cultures and the long resistance by the indigenous men and women, see the adapted narratives of the great Celtic mythological cycles, in Goettner-Abendroth: *Fee Morgane. Der Heilige Gral.*

36 Josef Weisweiler: *Die Stellung der Frau bei den Kelten und das Problem des "Keltischen Mutterrechts,"* Zeitschrift für keltische Philologie, Vol. 21, Halle 1939, Niemeyer Verlag, 205–279.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Markale, 38.

40 Weisweiler, 205–279.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 This applies generally to the great Old Irish belief in fairies, in which fairies were perceived as people from an older time who could be found around or in the megalithic tombs and possessed magic powers. These may have been actual encounters with or reminiscences of priestesses from the old, matriarchal culture. In any case, people were meant to behave respectfully towards them and their sites and did not dare to disturb them.

44 Markale, 129, 131, 143.

45 See for these myths: Markale, 71; Jan de Vries: *Keltische Religion,* Stuttgart 1961, Reprint Grenchen 2005, Edition Amalia, 53–55, 127–129, 242; publication in English: *The Study of Religion: A Historical Approach. Jan de Vries,* transl. and ed. by Kees W. Bolle, New York 1967, Harcourt, Brace & World. For a more detailed interpretation see Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, 142–143.

46 Goettner-Abendroth: Op. cit., 132–145.

47 The votive stones of the three matrons originate from the Romans, who had their garrisons in the Celtic Rhineland; they gave this triad of goddesses the name "Matrones," meaning "Mothers." Roman soldiers came not only from patriarchal Rome, but from many

different cultures of the Mediterranean area, where it was still common to worship mother goddesses. In Roman provinces they would transfer their veneration to the mother goddesses of those regions where their garrisons were located.

48 See on the typical patriarchal transformations of goddesses: Goettner-Abendroth: Op. cit., 166–167.

49 Claire French-Wieser: *Als die Göttin keltisch wurde. Ursprung und Verfall einer alteuropäischen Mythologie*, Bern 2001, Edition Amalia.—French-Wieser has carried out excellent research, identifying this in her critical analysis of the “Four Branches of the Mabinogi.”

50 A mythical example is the sorcerer Merlin, who served the Celtic King Arthur by cunningly stealing matriarchal magic from the native people and using insidious means to kill the defenders of matriarchal culture. See Goettner-Abendroth: *Fee Morgane* (sources there).

51 Glassman: *The Origins*, 1242–1244.

52 Marija Gimbutas: *The Balts. Ancient Peoples and Places*, New York, 1963, Praeger.

53 Op. cit., 77.

54 See, for example, the rock paintings of Tanum (South Sweden).

55 See, for example, the tomb of Kivik (South Sweden), in Mohen: *The world of megaliths*, 254, 276–277.

56 These Bronze Age suppliers in Central Germany were the Aunjetitz and Lusatian cultures.

57 Glassman, 1226.

58 Op. cit., 1228.

59 Gimbutas: *The Balts*, 70, 73.

60 *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 21st completely revised edition, 30 Vols., Leipzig 2006, F.A. Brockhaus, here: Vol. 10, 563–567; Vol. 20, 6–7.

61 According to the Greek-Roman historian Plutarch; see Jakob Amstadt: *Die Frau bei den Germanen*, Stuttgart 1994, Kohlhammer Verlag, 17–18.

62 Op. cit., 18–19.

63 Weisweiler: *Die Stellung der Frau*.

64 Glassman, 1230.

65 *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, Vol. 2, 433; Vol. 28, 561.

66 Op. cit., Vol. 16, 803–805.

67 Ibid.

68 Op. cit., Vol. 29, 196–197.

69 Apart from these migrations of peoples, other reasons for the collapse of the Roman Empire were its overstretched size, combined with its internal decadence. See Walter Pohl: *Die Völkerwanderung. Eroberung und Integration*, Stuttgart 2005, Kohlhammer Verlag.

70 Glassman, 1245.

71 According to the Roman author Tacitus: *Histories*, IV, Chapter 61; quoted by Amstadt, 19–21.

72 See to the practices of the Cimbri the author Strabon: *Geography*, VII, 1; quoted Op. cit., 17.

73 Op. cit., 79–81.

74 Markale, 34.

75 Amstadt, 91–92, 101.

76 Op. cit., 96–97, 99.

77 Op. cit., 98–102.

78 Tacitus: *Annals Germania*, Chapter 40; Strabon, *Geography*, VII, 1; quoted in Op. cit., 72–73.

79 Amstadt, 75; Robert Briffault: *The Mothers*, Bd. 1, 414–417.

80 The similarity of the tomb buildings suggests this; see Mohen, 110.

81 Amstadt, 24.—Wodan's behavior in this respect is particularly horrifying on the once holy Island of Ruegen, where he slaughtered the priestesses of the goddess Nerthus; see Goettner-Abendroth: "Die ‚Witten Wiwer' von Rügen," in: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie*, 51–54 (sources of the legends quoted there).

82 Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, 147, 155–156.

83 Op. cit., 155.

84 Ibid.

85 See this myth in *Die Edda*, English version *The poetic Edda*, re-interpreted in: Op. cit., 155–156.

86 Op. cit., 147–148, 157–158.

87 Tacitus: *Annals Germania*, Chapter 40.

88 Goettner-Abendroth: *The Goddess and Her Heros*, 154–159 (the mythological sources quoted there).

89 Op. cit., 159–160.—I have often mentioned this book of mine here because it is of interest not only in terms of content, but also methodologically. Not only is the trinity of the Great Goddesses with their Holy Kings in the cultural regions from India to Europe systematically identified (Bronze Age), but the typical transformations they suffered during the patriarchalization of their cultures are analyzed just as systematically.

90 See Goettner-Abendroth: *Frau Holle.*

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.—Apart from the goddesses, in Germanic myths and legends there are also, as in Celtic mythology, fairies and magical white women, as well as powerful elves. Both here, and there, they refer to the remnants of a former, native population that had retreated to remote areas, such as large forests, moorland, mountains, and islands. They only sporadically came into contact with the later population. See, for Central Europe, Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchale Landschaftsmythologie. Von der Ostsee bis Süddeutschland;* see, for the Alps, Goettner-Abendroth: *Berggöttinnen der Alpen*.

93 Hans Eisma: *Das alt-slawische Matriarchat*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 2000, Barinya Special, 4–5; Dexter, *Whence the Goddess*, 65.

94 Gimbutas and Dexter: *The Living Goddess*, 208–209.

95 Information from Kaarina Kailo.

96 The "Verdener Blutgericht" or "Sachsentaufe" in the year 782; see *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, Vol. 28, 667.

97 Saxo Grammaticus: *Gesta Danorum. The History of the Danes*, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, transl. by Peter Fisher, Oxford 2015, Clarendon Press.

98 Becker, Bovenschen, Brackert et al.: *Aus der Zeit der Verzweiflung. Zur Genese und Aktualität des Hexenbildes*, Frankfurt 1977, Suhrkamp Verlag. Claudia Honegger (ed.): *Die Hexen der Neuzeit. Studie zur Sozialgeschichte eines kulturellen Deutungsmusters*, Frankfurt 1978, Suhrkamp Verlag. Erika Wisselinck: *Hexen. Warum wir so wenig von ihrer Geschichte erfahren und was davon auch noch falsch ist*, Munich 1986, Frauenoffensive Verlag. Max Dashu: *Witches and Pagans. Women in European Folk Religion, 700–1100*, Richmond, CA 2016, Veleda Press.

99 For examples: A. Ortiz-Osés: *El matriarcalismo vasco*, Bilbao 1988, Universidad de Deusto. Hans Eisma, *Das alt-slawische Matriarchat.* Agnès Audibert: *Le Matriarcat*

Breton, Paris 1984, Presses Universitaires de France.—The book by Agnès Audibert is a very careful, ethnographic study, showing conditions in the traditional society of Brittany that are reminiscent of the traditional Basques. In each case the first-born child inherits the farm, son or daughter, giving the farm-heiress an important social and political role. Nevertheless, even here it is no longer a "matriarchy" (see Chapter 7 of the book in hand).

100 Eisma, 12.

101 Goettner-Abendroth: *Matriarchal Societies.*

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